Interview with Peter J. Skoufis

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

PETER J. SKOUFIS

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[Note: This transcript was not edited by Mr. Skoufis.]

Q: On behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, let me thank you first of all for participating in our program. We would appreciate it if you would just start with a synopsis of your background.

SKOUFIS: First, let me say that I am delighted to participate in the program. I was born and raised in Bangor, Maine. Both of my parents were immigrants from Greece; they had come to the U.S. as children. They were married in the U.S. and settled in Bangor. My father was a business man there. I graduated from the Bangor Public high School and went to the University of Maine. I graduated in 1941. My major was Political Science and History and Government, as it was called at the time.

While a senior at the University of Maine, I took and passed the Civil Service examination for Junior Professional Assistant (JPA). That was the principal avenue through which college graduates came to work for the United States Government. I thought this might give me the opportunity to pursue my earlier ambition of becoming a lawyer. So after graduating from Maine, I came to Washington and enrolled at George Washington University's Law School and started there in September 1941. At the same time, I

accepted an offer from the District of Columbia—Public Health and Welfare Bureau—which was proffered to me through the U.S. Civil Service Commission. The job was that of youth counselor in the Industrial School for Boys on Wisconsin Avenue.

I became interested in public service because first of all, I had grown up during the depression. I therefore viewed a government job as one that provided the greatest security. I don't think I ever entertained the idea of practicing law, but I did have aspirations to be a government lawyer to work in one of the many new government agencies that had been created as result Roosevelt's New Deal. So I was also interested in working for the Federal Government with a legal background. That is why I selected George Washington as the place to obtain a law degree because I could work for the government while getting my degree.

So I started my job at the School in September. I lived at the YMCA. Washington was at the time already beginning its defense efforts even though we had not yet entered World War II. People were flooding into Washington, taking jobs in the new temporary government agencies. The job I had was at that Boys' School, which was right across from Pearson's Liquor store in Valley—now it is called the Guy Mason Center. The School was for delinquent children, placed there by the Juvenile Court of Washington and the District's social workers. I was referred to the School by the Civil Service Commission. The reason why I accepted the offer of employment was because of the working conditions. I could live at the School. My duties included getting the kids out of bed at about 6 a.m., taking them to the classrooms and teaching civics. So I was both a teacher and a counselor. I was finished by 2 p.m. which left me free all afternoon and evening to do my George Washington work. It was an ideal set-up for me. The School was run along the lines of Boystown—giving the kids what they were lacking at home and to try to set them on a course of a more fruitful career. These kids had been picked up by the social workers from broken homes, or homes where one parent was in jail, etc. They stayed at the School until the social workers could make alternative arrangements, such as foster homes. The

School was run by principal Dan Ahern—former football coach at Western High School and a Georgetown athlete before then (a man of some reputation)—.

I worked at the School and attended Law School from September, 1941 until May 1942. Of course, in December, 1941, war broke out with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I, like many of my friends and University classmates, volunteered for military service. I had had ROTC training at Bangor High School and had taken some courses that I thought would help me getting my commission. But when I volunteered, I was rejected because of a physical problem that I had. I always had problems with my legs (varicose veins on both sides); so I was declared 4F by the Washington Selective Service Board. In May, 1942, I figured that I would have to find a position more in line with my career objectives. I applied for jobs throughout the Washington area. I applied to the Department of Agriculture, looking for a job in the administrative area, which was then headed by a Mr. William Jump, who was a very distinguished civil servant. I was accepted around the middle of May, 1942. I went home briefly to pick up some more of my possessions to move it all to Washington.

While in Bangor, I walked by my draft board which had kept in touch with me although my classification had been issued by the Washington board. I dropped in on the Bangor board to inform it of my new Washington address which was a rooming house convenient to the Agriculture Department. The fellow, who was an old family friend, at the Bangor board said: “Pete, we were about to call you”. I told him that I had already been processed and classified 4F. He said that that had been issued by the Washington board and didn't have validity because I was a Bangor resident and therefore under the jurisdiction of the Bangor board. So I began the process all over again; I started on a Saturday morning and by Saturday night, I was in the service. I had to call Washington; I couldn't get there in person because I had to report for duty at Fort Devens in a couple days. I was told by Ahern that I would be put on “military leave” by the Boys School. I never became an employee of the Agriculture Department.

First I went into the Army, then transferred to the Air Force and went to Florida and Sioux Falls, S.D. as an enlisted man. The latter was a radio operator's school and I became a radio operator until a notice came around offering people opportunity to go to Officers' Candidate School (OCS). I told them about my legs and they sent me to the hospital to see whether I could medically qualify for the Air Force training programs. At the hospital, I met a Dr. Butler from Bangor, who also knew my family and was a dear friend of my father's. Talk about luck in life!. I told Dr. Butler about my rejection when I tried to volunteer. He said he would fix me up and put me in the Sioux Falls hospital. I underwent a “bilateral ligation” operation. That fixed my problems and I got my medical clearance.

The first opportunity for OCS training required some ground school training followed by Air Force training; they wanted us to become ground liaison officers. So I went to Fort Benning in 1943 to become an infantry officer. After I got my gold bar, I went to Brooks Field in Texas where I became an aerial observer for a gunnery battalion. Then I was shipped out to the Pacific and ended up in Okinawa. By the end of the war, I was assigned to personnel work because my expertise became rather redundant. I was with a B-24 group—the 7th Bomber Command. Toward the end of the war, the B-29s became the main Air Force weapon system; they could fly to targets that the B-24s couldn't reach. So the war was over for many of the B-24 groups when the B-29 were phased in.

The Air Force had established a very elaborate personnel program to repatriate their personnel to the U.S. I got involved in that process as a personnel officer. That gave me some credentials. I sought that assignment because I was virtually unemployed in the 7th Bomber Command. My main role in Okinawa was to evacuate the POW camps in Japan. Unfortunately, I spent my last days in Okinawa in a hospital because I developed a growth on the back of my right calf. It was diagnosed as a melanoma—a wart that grew quickly and became red and bloody. I went to the hospital and had it excised. The pathologist said that he had found some malignancy through the biopsy. I brought the sample back with me in a bottle when I was ordered back to the U.S. for further treatment. I sailed from Okinawa

on a hospital ship to Seattle and then Fort Devens, where my service had started. That was the nearest military hospital to Bangor. At Fort Devens, they decided that I really should go to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington for chemotherapy treatment (or what was then called “chemotherapy”). So I went to Walter Reed and was there from February to mid-April, 1946 under observation for cancer. They would give me tests every day, but I was very ambulatory and I felt pretty good. So I spent a lot of time being entertained royally by the citizens of Washington—free tickets to shows, dinner invitations, etc.

I had plenty of time to formulate my plans for the future, including the resumption of my law school education which had been interrupted. I got in touch with the Boys School. Dan Ahern had left to go to work for the Veterans Administration; he was counseling veterans about the GI bill. I went to see him. I told him what my plans were which were to return to the Boys School. He discouraged me; he said that things had changed there and that I really shouldn't return. He suggested I come to work for the VA. I told him I couldn't do that because I was still in the military leave. He said that that was no problem. The School would put me on its roll for one day so that I could re-enter the civil service. Then the VA would pick me up. He turned me over to a personnel officer. I went before a medical board and I got my discharge. That was about the middle of June. The next day, I went to work for the VA as a registration officer. I determined eligibility for training under the GI “Bill of Rights”. My section was called “Registration and Rehabilitation”. After determining their eligibility, we counseled veterans on what courses they could take. At the time, the eligibility was determined by the number of months one had served in the military. The minimum was three months; the maximum was four years of college training. The program was doing very well.

I made an attempt to return to law school in September, but that was very difficult because everyone was returning to school and there was a real jam up. I probably would have had to apply in January or February, but I was still in the hospital at that time. In any case, I became very interested in my VA work and I was progressing pretty well and became chief of a section—a GS 11 position—in the Washington regional office on the

corner of H Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. One of my poignant memories of those days concerns the first weekend I was working in that regional office. We were then on C Street and Indian Avenue, where the District government now has its offices. We received word that we would be moving to H Street over Memorial Day weekend and that if we wanted to help, we would be paid over-time. I volunteered as many others did. We worked around the clock that weekend, putting stuff in boxes, putting boxes into trucks, unloading the trucks and then opening the boxes and putting their contents away in the new location. I think I received $200-300 for that weekend work and that was more money than I had seen in a long time. It was enough for a down-payment on an old Ford that I bought. I was living then in McLean Gardens apartments right off Wisconsin Avenue that had been built during the war. There was dormitory arrangement for single people —one building for males and one for females. I used to commute from there to the VA office, which was rather chaotic both because it was a new bureaucratic venture and because it had thousands and thousands of applicants. There were all sorts of problems— insufficient documentation, documentation that could not be certified, particularly discharge papers which were important because the law limited the benefits to only those who were discharged under “honorable conditions”. Washington was a very crowded city because a lot of people were coming to the government where things were beginning to happen.

The educational benefits provided under the GI bill were tremendous. A lot of our cases were for new schools that had sprung up practically overnight. Schools for radio mechanics, barber colleges, all sorts of new institutions, some obviously fly-by-night, but still eligible to take students supported by the VA. The student grants were about $30 per month for a single student and $50 for a married person. In addition, the GI bill paid for tuition, books and supplies. It was quite an operation and made for a very interesting experience. As I said, Washington became a very, very busy place.

My colleagues were very interesting. I became acquainted there with Harry McKee who later also joined the Foreign Service and became a close friend. By and large, they were very competent. They were very much like the group I had known before my military

service. They were in Washington for a purpose, namely to further their education. Many of my co-workers were very much like myself; they had their education interrupted by the war and had come to Washington to resume it. The jobs were here and so were the educational facilities. So we shared many common experiences and aspirations. The VA office I worked in was very active.

When I realized that I would not be able to return to law school in September, 1946, I took courses at the Graduate School of the Department of Agriculture. I took courses in personnel administration to further my interests and some other courses in the administrative area, such as budget. I did that for six months. I had already developed an interest by this time in management/administration.

One day, a flier came across my desk which announced that the VA was going to open offices in Paris, London, Rome, Mexico City, Manila and elsewhere to service the many ex-GIs who had decided to reside abroad. The VA was looking for candidates to fill these new offices. I was getting pretty tired by this time of waiting for the law school to admit me; I rationalized that I had spent the war years on one island after another, including 13 months in Honolulu at Hickam Field; the rest of the time I was on Guam, Okinawa, Saipan, etc. I debated the opportunity to go to Paris. You had to be able to speak French. That happened to be fine with me because if you come from Maine, you speak French as a second language. It wasn't exactly Parisian French; it was Canadian French. I had also had French in college; that had been my foreign language at the University of Maine, which was the customary thing to do. So I decided to throw my hat in for Paris although with some trepidation because I realized that I was not a fluent French speaker. Harry McKee, who was then heading a unit very near me, decided to apply for a job in London.

Both of us were called by some people in the central office who were staffing these foreign posts. Both of us were accepted and slated to be sent to Europe. I had never been in Europe; my ideas of Paris came from travelogues, fantasies and ex-GIs who had served in Europe and were now working for the VA. While sitting in Okinawa with little to do, I had

expressed an interest in military governments which were being established all over the world. I thought that if I had been accepted, I might have served in Europe, which would have exposed me to a part of the world I had not seen.

We were then instructed to report to the State Department for indoctrination and to become a member of the United States Foreign Service. An agreement had been reached between the VA and the State Department which was known as the “Bradley-Byrnes” agreement (Omar Bradley having been the head of the VA and Jimmy Byrnes the Secretary of State). That agreement stipulated that the VA would supply the technical personnel and the Foreign Service would supply the administrative support necessary to establish and maintain these new veterans' offices. The team would consist of a senior VA officer, who would then become the Veterans' Attach#. These teams would take care not only of screening the applications for educational grants, but also administer the claims programs—insurance, death, pensions, etc—which were necessary to support the widows of dead veterans. Many of these women were foreigners and many had children who were also eligible for certain benefits.

My senior officer, Mr. Share, had been a claims officer in the VA after World War I (he was a World War I veteran). I headed a group, consisting of four people and I also was the Registration person who determined eligibility under the school programs. We had two counselors to help veterans select programs and we had a budget and fiscal officer. The latter was there because the State Department was not able to handle the greatly increased workload of payments for substance or tuition and books. The Embassies and consulates were just collecting the filled out forms and sending them back to Washington to the International Affairs office of the VA. State didn't have either enough people or sufficiently trained people to handle the workload.

In my case, my Foreign Service appointment was to the Foreign Service Staff (FSS) Corps. My boss, Mr. Share, was given a Foreign Service Reserve (FSR) appointment. All the VA field office directors got FSR appointments. The staff members were given

FSS appointments. My payment for accumulated annual leave—six or seven days—was given to me by the VA and then I was separated from the Civil Service. I was sworn into the Foreign Service. I had been earning $4,500 per annum at the VA; that was probably the salary of a GS-11 at the time. The FSS-8 level, which I was given provided roughly the same pay, but in fact my earnings almost doubled because in addition to salary, the Foreign Service give allowances to its employees. Those allowances were primarily to pay for rent in Paris and maybe for a cost-of-living differential. So that when I went to Paris, my gross income was $9,000. I thought I had made a great career change. Going to Paris with that kind of income seemed to be the most that the world could offer me. I took the Paris job and left for France soon thereafter. I actually entered the Foreign Service in March, 1947.

Paris was a great experience. I went to France by ship—a converted troop ship. On the same ship, was a VA team that was going to open the Geneva office—John Hays, Randy Dickens and Frank Harris. The Paris office had already opened several months earlier. Share, his secretary and others were already in place. We sailed at the end of April. Hays had been in the Army's military government—G-5—and had been in France and Paris from right after the invasion. He was coming from the Richmond, VA office as did his whole team. He had with him a convertible Cadillac which was unloaded at Le Havre. He was going to drive to Geneva through Paris and asked me if I wanted to go along. That was a trip! Every town we went through, brought back some memories to John of his war campaigns. He would visit a French family here and one there; he would see mayors with whom he had worked. Everywhere we went he was greeted like a long lost friend who was returning home. We got our fill of Calvados. It took us three days to get from Le Havre to Paris.

When I got to Paris, Share wanted to know where the hell I had been. He said that the Embassy had been looking for me. So I went there and found that it was the Budget and Fiscal section who was looking for me because I was on their payroll. That section was run by Larry Daimond; Joe Dagenhart was the Finance Officer—he was the one who signed

the checks. The Veterans Program was actually a part of the Consular Section because it had been determined that our functions were more akin to that of the Consular section than any other embassy office. So we reported to the chief Consular officer. Physically, we had separate offices in the Hotel D'Iena off the Champs-Elys#es. We shared space with the Office of the Foreign Liquidation Commission, which was an Army operation aimed at getting rid of all of the Army's surplus equipment in Europe. Paris was the headquarters. We ate in the Embassy cafeteria. The Embassy assigned us an old Chrysler for transportation purposes which we used to go to the Embassy for lunch. There were no other restaurants in Paris at the time—food rationing was still in effect.

I also remember a long May weekend. My birthday was May 7 and on this particular year, it fell on a French holiday which made it a long weekend. During the next week there was another holiday—the day the Allied troops liberated Paris in 1945. The following week, we had another holiday. So it seemed to me that for the first few weeks I was in Paris, we only worked four-day weeks. I just couldn't get over that. I thought it was a great deal. That of course was sheer coincidence, but I won't forget that introduction to French work habits. We had a lot of work to do because we found that the French schools—primarily the University of Paris—had not been paid at all even though it had accepted ex-GIs as students. They had sent bills to the Embassy for tuition and books and wanted reimbursement. There were about 2,000 American students who had taken their discharges abroad and were attending universities in France. Then there were another approximately 1,500 claims, mostly coming from French dependents of soldiers who had been killed in the war. We also had to work on claims by World War I veterans whose benefits had been interrupted by the war and who wished to be reinstated. So the office's workload was heavy.

My primary function was to get the veterans on a payroll so that their benefits would begin to flow. Some because they had not been paid were already beginning to become involved in illegal activities so that they could make enough to live on. The black market was rampant in Paris and in Europe in general, especially in currency dealings and cigarettes.

The ex-GIs were getting packages from home, or were buying goods from friends who had commissary and the PX privileges—there were still in existence—and selling the goods on the black market. There were still all sorts of small military units all around Paris cleaning up after the war. There was very unsavory business being conducted at the time. Both the VA and the State Department were anxious to get some money to these veterans so that they would not need to survive from illegal operations.

We finally got straightened out and money began to flow to the veterans. We worked out a system which permitted the checks to be written in Paris rather than in Washington. Our finance man, Bob Griggs, who had worked in the VA's Buffalo office, set up a system with Joe Dagenhart which permitted Joe to issue monthly checks to a list of people that Bob would provide with the amounts of their entitlement. I certified that list which was time consuming because I had to check to make sure that all of the people on the list were eligible.

At the end of the month, the check would be ready for the veterans or other beneficiaries. The big problem was how to get these checks to the recipients. The veterans were living in rooming and boarding houses all over Paris and were constantly moving. So we decided that they would have to come to our offices to pick up the checks. That meant that on the first of the month there were would be long line of people waiting for his or her check. It was useful to us because it also meant that we knew that the intended recipient was still alive and that the checks were getting to the right person. We asked the recipients to certify at the time he or she picked up the check that they were in fact still going to school and therefor eligible for their benefits. That satisfied the GAO requirements. The system was somewhat cumbersome, but it worked well. After about six months in Paris, we moved from the Hotel D'Iena to the Embassy and were co-located with the Consular Section. The Embassy had vacated the space by moving out the regional courier office. So the grantees came to the Embassy on the first day of every month. Of course, the Consular section was well known to many of the ex-GIs because that is where they had to go whenever they lost or had stolen their passports. That happened frequently. The

Consular officer was Agnes Schneider who was a real legend in the Foreign Service; she was in charge of the Passport section. The ex-GIs had quickly learned that their passports were valuable commodities; that increased the issuances of new passports considerably. I found veterans to be pretty good guys, but many acquired unsavory reputations in the Consular section.

A lot of the veterans were artists who were going to art schools in Paris. Because of their temperament they were difficult to deal with; some were nearly impossible. A lot studied French; others just stayed there because Paris was just a nice place to be after the war. They all needed the $50 per month subsistence allowance. There were a number of future distinguished people among the beneficiaries—people like Art Buchwald, who had been a Marine who stayed to study French at the Alliance Frances because he enjoyed the place and he had a chance to write. I would say that 60-70% were serious students; the others were there for the thrill of being in Paris.

For most of our substantive work, we dealt directly with the VA in Washington. We started to send material through the State Department, but then found out that headquarters was not receiving our mail. There was no special office in the Department that was concerned with our operations so that much of our mail seemed to disappear. There was a woman in the Department that was supposed to act as the liaison with the VA, but she became overwhelmed by the workload. So we began to sent most of our reports—fiscal, etc—directly to the VA. We were spending its appropriations and it had to have these reports to maintain accountability. So we worked closely with the VA on the technical aspects of our work.

I got to Paris in 1947 and stayed for four years. As we gained experience, we developed a modus operandi with State Department—the Paris Embassy and the VA Office. The system worked very well; the Embassy became much more responsive to our problems in terms of space and administrative support in general. One indication of that was the fact that we were permitted to move into the Embassy. After my first year in Paris, the

Embassy improved greatly in the administrative area with the arrival of Graham Martin as the chief administrative officer. He brought with him a team of administrative people who greatly improved the Embassy's operations and made it much more responsive to its clients' need including our own. We got space and people when we needed them. We were quite happy with Martin, Eddie Crouch, Seaborn Foster, Harvey Bufallo, Jack Herfurt—a whole succession of administrative types who were complete professionals. The administrative support became first rate and our relationships with the Embassy became very good. Although we were, as were all Staff Corps personnel, responsible for finding our own housing, but we were given lots of help.

Ambassador Bruce became Ambassador. He used to walk around the Embassy from time to time just to see how things went. He was not an infrequent visitor to our offices. He would say that he was a veteran and would ask about his insurance program. We would brief him on how it operated and that if he wanted to keep up his insurance, he had to pay premiums. Then he would ask about the programs for which he was eligible. He took an interest in us and made us feel a part of the Embassy. It really gave our morale a boost. That was also true of the Consul General, who was Joe Gray. We were all included in the Embassy-wide parties, like 4th of July. We really felt part of the Embassy and of the Consular Section especially. There weren't many men officers in the Consular Section, so were very welcomed. The women officers used to call on us if they ever encountered a male problem, e.g. some obstreperous American young man who was getting out of line. We were sitting close by and would come to the rescue of the woman consular officer. In general, the Embassy was very forthcoming, both work-wise and socially.

However, one problem developed. As I mentioned earlier, we had all entered the Foreign Service in the Staff Corps except for the head man, who was an FSR. We became part of the Department's promotion system; the Inspectors reviewed our work; we were subject to the performance evaluation system—we were full-fledged members of the Foreign Service for personnel administration purposes. But no one performing VA work was getting promotions. As I was an FSS-8 as was Harry McKee in London; Columbo in Rome was

at the same grade and none of us were getting promoted. The staff corps was being reviewed yearly and yearly some were being promoted, but none of us. So after three years, I went in to talk to the administrative people. I was delegated by my boss to talk to the Embassy on behalf of all of us doing veterans' work. I was told that the VA people didn't really work for the State Department; we were working, in their eyes, for the VA. We were viewed as temporary employees of the Foreign Service who were in the Foreign Service for administrative convenience, but whose career was in the VA. I pointed out that we had been separated from the VA and that we were no longer a part of the Civil Service. We believed that we were full-fledged members of the State Department. I finally convinced the Embassy that we were indeed members of the Foreign Service.

The Embassy referred the matter back to Washington. And there we found the same problem; our names had not been considered by the promotion panels because we were not considered part of the Foreign Service. We were viewed essentially as temporary adjuncts. We became very discouraged because we had really fallen into a crack. I was the Consular Section's duty officer when North Korea invaded the South—I thought we were back in the Civil War (although the Department did not consider us as full fledged members of the Foreign Service, the we were fully integrated in the Consular Section and took our turns as duty officers) I got a call in French from a representative of the Press Francais wanting to know what the Embassy's views were and what we were doing about this development. I told him that I would call back and ran upstairs to the Ambassador's office. There were several people there following developments. As time passed, we realized that the U.S. would join the conflict. All of us in the VA saw a repeat of previous experiences—another GI bill, another cycle of support.

I went to see Graham Martin and told him that I didn't want to stay in the VA operation. I wanted out and was prepared to return to the U.S. He asked whether I would be interested in working for the Embassy. I told him that I had been in Paris for four years and that I thought it was time to move on. I had been recently married and I though it was time to get back home. Then I got a cable from the VA informing me that Tom Quinnen in Rome was

about to retire and that I had been assigned to replace him. I thought that that job sounded interesting; I wanted to get back to Italy and I would be in charge of the office. Tom had been an FSR and an Attach#—diplomatic passport and status. The VA promised that I would be given the same rank and privileges that Tom had had.

So at the end of 1950, Helen and I embarked for Rome; we were anxious to do a tour there. We drove to Rome with all of our earthly belongings. We didn't have many personal effects because we had lived in a furnished apartment in Paris after we were married in 1949. After we arrived in Rome, we ran into similar problems. The Department's attitudes toward the former VA employees had been adopted by Embassy Rome. We were to be supported by the Embassy, but were viewed as essentially VA employees. I did my best to disabuse them of that notion. The Rome administrative officer was Gase Lukas, assisted by Tom Carroll and Jim McDevitt. Mrs. Flack was the disbursing officer. We dealt with her because she got the money from the VA and wrote out the checks to our clients.

So we had the same perception problems in Rome as we had had in Paris. The “straw that broke that camel's back” came when my mother sent me a Christmas present—some shirts and ties. The package was held up by the Italian postal authorities for customs duties. At the time, that duty may have been all of $1.50 or perhaps even less. I refused to pay it and sent the chit I had received to the personnel office so that they would clear my package through customs under the diplomatic immunity process. I was then told that my name was not on the “Diplomatic List”. I said that I was replacing Tom Quinnen as the head of the VA office and had been told that I would be accorded the same privileges that he had. The Embassy checked with the State Department who again took the position that I worked for the VA and therefore not eligible for any diplomatic privileges. That meant that my car would also be subjected to taxation; I refused to pay that as well. The Embassy said that my car would be impounded; I said “So be it”. I became very stubborn.

Of course, we had a very busy office and I had many other things to do besides wrestling with the State Department's bureaucracy. Finally, Gase Lukas used his own name to clear

my package through customs and some else was worked out on the car; I never did pay taxes. So slowly our status was clarified. In the meantime in Paris, a regional office to handle VA matters was established by consolidating the London and Paris offices so that our relationships with Washington began to flow though Paris. But there not seemed to have been any meeting of minds in Washington on our status; each Embassy played it by ear. Some of them were very flexible; they did their level best and kept the paper flowing. In those days, they didn't send cables on this subject, but sent “Operations Memoranda”. They kept us pretty well informed. In any case, we knew from the annual promotion lists which never included any ex-VA people.

It was getting close to five years without any of us having been promoted. Our status was still being debated. I went to Rome on a direct transfer in December, 1951. I stayed there until the summer. The work-load was different in Rome than it had been in Paris. There were fewer students and more claims. All the payments to Italian beneficiaries had been suspended during World War II because Italy was an enemy nation. Payments could only be resumed after the claimant had certified to his or her eligibility and after we had investigated the claim because payments could not be made to those who had aided and abetted the enemy. Most of the beneficiaries were World War I veterans who were poor and farmers and who had come to Italy during our Depression. A high proportion had been victims of poison gas during World War I and were therefore eligible for small disability pensions. During the Depression, they found out that the small amounts went further in Italy then they did in the U.S. and went to there to live. There must have been over 2,000 World War I veterans living in Italy. Of course, when the veteran died, his widow received half of the benefits, which although very little, still enabled them to live in a small Italian village. A system was worked out which permitted them to cash their checks at the Bank D'Italia; we would sent the dollar check to the Bank which would then call the payee and make the payment in lira.

We lived in a furnished apartment in Rome. Two of my staff, who had families, were housed in government owned housing in a new apartment building that the U.S.

government had built. The allowances were adequate to cover the rent. Our offices were an integral part of the Consular Section, which was in a small villa next to the Chancery. Later we were moved to the FIAT building which was just two blocks down the street toward the railroad station. We were housed there along with some other U.S. government offices. We moved primarily because we needed more space which couldn't be provided in the villa. Our files were growing by leaps and bounds. We hired more local personnel to handle the paper work and to serve as interpreters. All our documents had to be translated; furthermore, in Italy, out clients were more often natives than they were in France. Many of the ex-GIs were also artists. Also we had a large contingent going to the medical school in Bologna because the American schools were over-subscribed and Bologna's medical school had a very good reputation.

My job in Rome was to be the head of the office. I had five or six Americans working for me and probably the same number of locals. Our principal contact was the Consul General and the administrative and disbursing officers. We always faced that end-of-the-month deadline; we would bring the payroll to the disbursing office a couple of days before the end of the month and someone there would then type out the checks. I thought that the Rome Embassy, just like the Paris one, did a very good job in helping us. For example, my mother's package issue was resolved by subsequently having her use the APO—she had sent the first package by international mail. We enjoyed living abroad and the emoluments were fair; we thought that if one had to work for Uncle Sam, doing so abroad was as rich as experience as one could have. We had good personal relations with the Rome Embassy staff, but unlike Paris, we of course never saw the Ambassador, Mr. James Dunn. I think I saw the DCM, Llewellyn Thompson one time when I first arrived and reported to him. I had by that time become “Foreign Service wise” and knew what one had to do, like “dropping the card”. We were very much integrated into the Consular Section. The legal staff helped us from time to time because we needed assistance on the status of the Italian claimants.

The only fly in the ointment was that nagging question of our status and that began to wear on me. There were a lot of other new activities—agriculture, commerce—that were being integrated into the Department and did not seem to have the same problems that we did. There were always a lot of discussions on “how he got into the Foreign Service?”—the Manpower Act, the Ramspeck Act, etc. In the meantime, the VA group was entirely neglected. I had become much more militant on the question of the ex-VA staff feeling that I representing not only myself, but all my colleagues around the world who were also being left out in the cold. Since I had been one of the earliest people to join the Foreign Service, people looked to me to carry their message. I was to be the test case and although I don't think I antagonized anyone, I was always after the administrative people to resolve our issue. Socially, we were part of the consular group and very much involved. As in Paris, we were invited to the Fourth of July party where we would meet the Ambassador and his wife. The ladies were very expert in taking your hand and moving you right along; I was always amazed how they managed to keep the line going; you got moved from one side of them to the other in a hurry.

The Embassy's personnel office—Jim McDevitt and Tom Carroll—were very helpful and were constantly bugging the Department about our issue. One day there was an announcement that two “high” State Department officials were coming to Rome and that they would be available for consultation on any problems any one might have. These officials were Pete Martin and Bill Boswell, who were part of the Foreign Service Administration Office. I took the opportunity to talk to them about our problem. They took notes and promised to look into it when they got back to Washington. It was roughly the same conversation I had had with members of the Inspection Corps when they were in Paris several years earlier. That dialogue never produced anything. In any case, I didn't hear anything directly from Martin and Boswell; I was still an FSS, my car still had a French license plate because I refused to pay the Italian tax. I was not on any diplomatic list provided the Italian Foreign Ministry. That was the situation when we went on home leave.

Helen and I agreed that I would leave the Foreign Service as long as it didn't recognize us as a part of it. I had written to the VA people who were anxious to have me return to their employment. It was about to seek new authorities to handle its work-load. While in Rome, I had written a paper on how I thought the system could be improved—eligibility determination, fraud elimination (which was not unusual on the part of “schools” which were not that and our own veterans who did not attend schools but took the stipends. People at the schools would certify anybody's attendance. In fact, schools in Europe did not take attendance very often and the educational system really didn't care whether you attended classes or not. It was a different educational system from the American one—we were more disciplined. We adapted the Americans rules to the European circumstances and did the best we could. We also had inadequate man-power to investigate all the fraud possibilities. The schools, of course, were interested in maximizing their rolls to earn more tuition. The language training schools were particularly loose in their monitoring of attendance and we used to watch them particularly carefully). My paper had received some attention at VA headquarters and the people there seemed eager to have me come back to the organization in the International Affairs Office.

When I arrived in Washington, I reported to the State Department's personnel office. I had been at the VA and had worked all the arrangements which would bring me back into the Civil Service. But I went to see a Miss Bland, who was the personnel officer for the European region in the central Personnel Office. She knew my case and said that I would be returning to Rome—I did have round trip travel orders. Then I told her that my plans had changed and that I was terminating my association with the Foreign Service to return to the VA. She tried to talk me out of it. When I told her for my reasons for leaving, she acted surprised because she said that she had written me about my status issue. I said that I have never received a letter. She told me to come back in a couple of days and she would then have my file available with a copy of this letter.

As I left her office, I ran into my old college classmate, Art Weatherbee. We had gone to Maine University together. Art was then in the Personnel Office working with Art Jean. He was a mid-level manager in the Personnel Office. So we chatted and I told him about my experiences in the Foreign Service. He also acted surprised because he thought that the issue had been resolved. I then repeated what I had told Miss Bland, namely that nothing had happened and I had not received any communications which reflected any change in the Department's attitude to the ex-VA types. Of course, I had been on a ship for the last few days as was the custom in those days so that I had not had any mail for at least two weeks. Art repeated that my problem had been taken care of after he had been given to him by Pete Martin and Bill Boswell. I told him that I would be back in a couple of days, but that in the meantime, I was working on leaving the Service and exercising my re-employment rights with the VA. Art asked me to reconsider because the Department was expanding and looking for manpower. He also asked that I return to see him.

I returned in a couple of days to see Miss Bland. She opened my file and there was the letter that was supposed to have been sent to me. Whoever drafted it, apparently put into my file by mistake because it was still unsigned. That really confirmed to me how screwed up the Department was. Martin and Boswell were in Rome in May; I went on home leave in September and not a word from the Department in the intervening period, despite the several inquiries from the Embassy in Rome. I thought that this was another example of the Department's operations; when you are face-to-face, then it responds; if you are far away, no action is taken. In any case, the letter explained that the Department had finally located the Bradley-Byrnes agreement of 1947. Until we had reminded them of it, the people in Washington didn't even know it existed! The personnel people had in the letter agreed that I had been quite right and that I was a member of the Foreign Service all the years since I had arrived in Paris. I thanked them for letting me know after all these years that I had been correct, but I pointed out that they were a little later—I was no longer interested in the State Department. They said they would send me back to do veterans' work, but I told them that I had done for five years and it was time for me to move on.

There was another wave of claims and applicants stemming from the Korean War and I had had enough of that work.

Then I went to see Art Weatherbee, who by that time had also found out that someone had goofed. I think all the personnel types had a guilty feeling because they had all let my case fall in the cracks. He also suggested that I wait for a little while; he suggested that I go to Bangor for my home leave and let him have my home phone number so that when a good assignment came up, he could reach me. So that is what I did.

We went to Bangor. I had told my friends in the VA that I would be back in Washington in a month after my home leave. I stayed on the State Department's payroll while on home leave. Shortly after arriving in Bangor, someone in Personnel called me and said that there were two administrative jobs opening up, one in Israel and one in South Africa. The personnel type wanted to know whether I would be interested in becoming an administrative officer. I said that I wasn't really sure. But the more I thought about it and the more I discussed it with Helen, the more interested we became. I was more interested in the South Africa job because my father had a relative who lived there and who had recently visited Bangor—the first time since they were kids in the old country (one had left Greece to go to the United States and the other had gone to South Africa). I didn't return the personnel officer's call while cogitating on my options. So one day, he called me back and said he had to know. I told him that we were prepared to stay in the Foreign Service and that we were prepared to go to South Africa. He said he was delighted and that I could count on becoming the administrative officer in Pretoria in about three or four months. In the meantime, he said I would be assigned to the Foreign Service Institute.

When I returned to Washington, I went to see Miss Bland again, who was so embarrassed by the whole series of events that she turned me over to one of her colleagues. That person arranged for me to see Art Stevens, who was the Executive Director for the Bureau of European Affairs (his deputy was Herman Pollack). South Africa at the time was under the jurisdiction of EUR. In any case, I was known in EUR because I had just finished a tour

in Rome and my situation was known to the Bureau. I was told by the personnel officer in EUR that everybody was trying to find a way to remedy my lack of promotion which I and all my ex-VA colleagues had suffered through the Department's error. I cited the case of Jack Herfurt, Seaborn Foster and Eddie Crouch who had joined the Foreign Service as FSS, but had become Foreign Service Officers (FSO). Herfurt received two promotions in one year as a security officer. I assumed he had an “angel” watching over him back in Washington. He had figured out how to beat the system and how to get promoted.

Q: Why did the Department tag you as an “administrative” type? Hadn't you work been primarily in veterans' claims and benefit determination?

SKOUFIS: I assume because of my background in personnel and my education. Also in my Rome job, the duties were mostly of an administrative/management character. I might have been assigned to a consular job as happened to many of my colleagues in fact—John Bargus, Brian Collins, Gallow, for example. All of the former VA staffers left their jobs shortly after I did and the Department was very forthcoming in offering them jobs in other Foreign Service activities. Harry McKee was the other ex-Va man who entered the administrative field. A couple quit and returned home. But most of that first group of people who had opened the VA overseas offices left that work and entered other phases of the Foreign Service. The Department tried hard to remedy the damage done by the lack of promotions. I went to South Africa after attending one of the first administrative officer training programs ever offered by the FSI. It was taught by Doc Waterman. It was three or four weeks long and I found it very interesting. Most of it concerned finance and State's financial process; we also learned about the functions of an administrative staff and what was expected of an administrative officer. We sat in with the Budget and Fiscal officers who were attending their own training program when the subject matters of the two programs overlapped.

Charlie Tanguy was one of my colleagues in the course. Most of the people in the class were expanding their foreign service experience; they had been serving in other

foreign service functions, like political and consular. They wanted to take a crack at an administrative officer position. I thought the course was very good. I was very impressed. It covered the whole range of administrative activities as well as the role of administration in the Foreign Service. That role had already taken root in the field; there was an understanding of the authority of the administrative officer and his or her relationship to the rest of the Embassy. FSI helped us understand that relationship better and how an administrative officer fitted into the Ambassador's team. My later experience indicated that there was still a lot of work to be done in terms of enhancing the role of administration abroad, but as time went along, it became much more effective. But when I attended FSI, this process of understanding and acceptance had already started. I was satisfied with the course and found it very useful once I got to South Africa. Waterman tried to instill a “can do” attitude which impressed me greatly. He tried to point out that once we were at post, we would be very much more on our own because were far removed from Washington; our main objective was to get the job done. That job was essentially to facilitate the work of all the other Embassy staff members. He told us to keep the Department informed of what we had done, but that we should not hesitate to get things done, within the law, without asking for permission all the time. That view became instilled in us and I was very pleased with that view because that was my philosophy then and later on in my career. I always favored getting the job done and worrying about the paper work later.

Q: You finished your FSI training in December, 1952 and went to Pretoria as administrative officer.

SKOUFIS: That is correct. We flew to Pretoria after having spent the Christmas holidays at home. We flew to Rome to pack our belongings, which had been left there because our original travel orders assumed that we would be returning to post. By that time, we had acquired a refrigerator and that was our sole household furniture. We then flew to South Africa on a Pan American Constellation plane, stopping at a couple of airports on

the way. It was a long flight in those days and we landed rather groggy. We were met by an Embassy representative and taken to our hotel.

Prior to my arrival, the administrative work for the Embassy and the constituent posts was handled by the administrative staff at the Consul General in Johannesburg. As EUR changed administrative officers, it also changed the system in South Africa. The main administrative office was moved to Pretoria which is only about 25 miles from Johannesburg. The latter was the largest American post in South Africa, so it became the “tail wagging the dog”. Ambassador Gallman was not happy with his administrative staff being that far away, so during the absence of an administrative officer, he and the Bureau made the shift. My predecessor had been in Johannesburg and he was not replaced. So my first job when I got to Pretoria was to make sure that the transfer of responsibilities went smoothly and that all the administrative support functions in South Africa were integrated. Pretoria got a general services officer, a budget and fiscal officer and we ran the administrative function from there.

South Africa at the time had a summer and a winter capital. That was an added workload. It was also interesting because for example Pretoria had no consular section. It was so close to Johannesburg that all consular functions were handled from there. The Department, in its wisdom, had decided not to create a consular district which would be serviced by the Embassy in Pretoria. There really was no need because Johannesburg was servicing the whole area quite adequately. All the passport work for Americans living in South Africa was handled by Johannesburg. If someone walked into the Embassy for a consular service, we sent him to Johannesburg. If the American citizen didn't want to do that, he or she would have to wait for a consular officer to come to Pretoria, which actually happened quite frequently. Then the service could be rendered. It often had to do with notarization of a savings bond, which could not be cashed without the certification of a consular officer. But since the consular officers traveled back and forth so frequently, it

was really not much of a hardship for American citizens to travel 25 miles or wait for a day or two for the consular officer to come to Pretoria.

We had no problems with the integration of the administrative activities. When I first arrived in South Africa, I encountered my first Department financial crisis which would occur periodically. We had a change of administrations in Washington, with Eisenhower being the new President and John Foster Dulles the Secretary of State. Immediately, there was an economy wave. Certain programs were eliminated, staffs were reduced and we were supposed to do more with less. Before I had arrived, it had been the practice for the Ambassador, the Political and the Economic Sections would move to Cape Town for the session of the South African legislature. When the legislature was not in session, the staff would move back to Pretoria. We had an Ambassador's residence in both places. The maintenance of the Cape Town residence was the responsibility of our Consulate General there. I used to go to Cape Town at the beginning of the legislative session to make sure that all preparations had been made for the Ambassador and the accompanying staff. This included not only housing, but also the office work. We were fortunate that our Air Attach# had a plane at his disposal which we would use to fly to Cape Town and back. He needed the flying time and we needed the transportation. That is also the way we shuffled the mail pouch back and forth. The pouch would come to Pretoria from Washington, where we would sort the mail and transship those pieces that were addressed to the people in Cape Town. If there was something urgent for the Ambassador, we had the capability of wiring it to him by using the old-fashioned one-time pad system. Generally speaking, those situations were few and far between. Most of the time, the pouch system was adequate and the material was shipped on the Air Force attach#'s plane.

I was never in Cape Town for a whole legislative session. As I said, I went at the beginning and sporadically thereafter. We didn't move any of the administrative staff. After the economy drive started, we ceased sending whole sections to Cape Town. Instead, if the legislature was to debate an economic matter, we would send someone from the economic section to Cape Town for that debate and then he or she would return to

Pretoria. If the issue was political, the chief of the Political Section would go or a member of his staff. The Deputy Chief of Mission would always stay in Pretoria. There were times when we had skeleton staffs both in Pretoria and Cape Town. The system worked adequately.

We had 4 constituent posts: Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg plus the Embassy at Pretoria. It was a very interesting operation. It ran well, partly because we were at the end of the communications line from Washington. We got a pouch once a week on the Pan American flight. It was a big occasion; we would go to the airport to meet the flight. Then we would be busy for two or three days dealing with the material in the pouch; then we would reseal that pouch for its flight back to Washington. It was a good operation; we had a chance to play a lot of tennis and golf.

Q: When you went to Pretoria, you had not had any State Department administrative experience. What did you expect and what did you find?

SKOUFIS: I had some trepidations, of course. It was very exciting to go to a new post and being a section chief. First of all, I found a very cooperative staff. The administrative staff was a mixture of old-timers and new blood, such as myself, e.g. post war Foreign Service members. We established a very good relationship. We had an interesting mixture in the Embassy as a whole. The DCM—Mr. Robertson—was a political appointee, but the Ambassador was a career officer. Robertson was Mrs. Shouse's (the Wolf Trap founder) son-in-law. It was somewhat unusual for the Department to have political appointees as DCMs, but I have served with two of them: one was the gentleman in Pretoria and the other was Phil Kaiser in London. Of course, Phil had been an Ambassador before he was assigned to London. Pretoria was also one of two posts I have served in which had no consular section; the other was The Hague which was in Rotterdam consular district. So I have some unique experiences in the Foreign Services.

Robertson was a very interesting guy. He had been appointed by a Democratic administration. When the Eisenhower administration took over, we assumed that his appointment would lapse. But ambassador Gallman was recalled to Washington to serve on the State Department selection boards, so Robertson became the Charge'. While serving in that job, he presented me with a very delicate dilemma. He decided that he would use the Ambassador's automobile. It was not a big car, but it was the only real passenger vehicle we had. Ambassador Gallman had left his wife and children in Pretoria with no transportation because she didn't drive and the Embassy had always supported her. We did have two station wagons in the motor pool. As you can see, Pretoria was a small operation. When Robertson became Charge', he insisted on all the emoluments that went with the Ambassador's office. He wanted to be able to fly the flag when he drove from home to the office or to his appointments. That left poor Mrs. Gallman with no transportation. I went to see her to tell her of the situation. She was a little upset, but she was a veteran and so happy to be in South Africa with her husband and children—the Ambassador had ben in London during World War II and more recently, Ambassador in Poland, so that he had been separated from his family on several occasions. So South Africa was a dream assignment for the Gallman family because they could all be together. They were very nice. But the relationship between the Ambassador and the DCM became strained quickly when Gallman learned while in the U.S. what was going on in Pretoria. Fortunately, Mrs. Gallman told her husband that we were taking good care of her. That helped my stock no end. I had learned one of the first principles of an administrative officer quickly: take care of the Ambassador and his family first. Also, two days after Ambassador Gallman returned, Robertson was on his way back to the States since the Republicans had decided not to keep him in the Service.

Q: Did you find any surprises in the management of the Administrative Section?

SKOUFIS: Not really. It was an easy task. It was very easy to do. One developed a real feel and understanding for the role of the Foreign Service locals. The South Africans were

very competent. We had some black South Africans who ran the motor pool and served as messengers. They were all very competent and well educated. The administrative officer's role was very easy. The main problem was the new emphasis on security. We didn't have any Marine guards. In addition to my other duties, I was also the security officer (prior to my assignment, it was probably the auxiliary responsibility for one of the junior members of the Political or Economic Sections). We had to develop systems to keep the paper flow moving while keeping it away from the local personnel. Prior to my arrival, there had been less concern about what documents the locals had access to. The whole atmosphere was quite relaxed. Also when the administrative work was done primarily in Johannesburg, it was a fellow by the name of Neil Coney, who was the administrative officer and one of his locals was responsible for the handling of documents. Coney left shortly after my arrival.

This new emphasis was an interesting experience for me. The whole Embassy staff was in rented space—a certain number of offices in a public building. That certainly was a challenge to provide good security. I assume the interest in security in the early 1950s was due to Senator McCarthy's inquisitions. We all began to be very conscious about security. The pouch was another problem. We had a special arrangement with Pan American which flew a State Department courier to Pretoria once a week, as I have mentioned. In addition, every Pan American flight had a special pouch which was entrusted to the pilot according to the rules which had to be delivered to an American official at the airport in Pretoria. That American was either me or one of our two communicators or sometimes the duty officer depending on the plane's arrival time. I can remember very vividly sitting at the airport at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning patiently waiting for the plane. It was due to arrive shortly before midnight, but because we were at the end of the line and the plane laid over for two or three days to rest the crew, we just had to wait because the pilot had to deliver it personally to an American government official. It was quite a show when we did receive the pouch.

As a sidelight to my South African experience, I might just mention that Robertson was replaced by Wilson C. (Bill) Flake. He had been a Foreign Service Inspector and once

he arrived, he really took over the management of the Embassy. He was my boss on a regular basis; the DCM really took over the management responsibilities and tighten the reins. We had a couple of Foreign Service people who had been in the Service for many years who had become quite casual about coming to work. They included as part of their working hours the evening entertainment in which they had to participate and therefore would not come to the office until 10 or 11 o'clock. The Embassy opened at 9 o'clock. So Bill Flake began to have staff meetings at 9 o'clock. That was very hard on the chief of the Political Section who found it very difficult to begin the working day so early in the morning.

We had no great difficulties in supervising the administrative work of the constituent posts. Travel in South Africa was easy; when we couldn't go with the Air Attach#, we used local air service. We would leave Pretoria, fly to Durban where we exchanged pouches at the airport or we might spend the day there if there was a particular problem; then could fly to Port Elizabeth, then to Cape Town and back to Johannesburg all on the same flight if you wished. The South African airline made the round trip in about 8 or 9 hours, so that we could distribute the mail all in one day. We would do that frequently because someone from the Consulate would meet us at the airport, where we would exchange pouches. We could spend an hour with the representative of each Consulate, who in some cases might have been the Consul General himself. That gave us an opportunity to discuss mutual problems. Sometime, if we needed to spend more time a post, we would ask the Air Attach# to give us a ride. He had intelligence work to do so that we didn't disrupt his work, but just tagged along. Port Elizabeth had a big GM plant in which automobiles were assembled. An American tire company also had a plant there. So we used to go to Port Elizabeth quite often. South Africa had right hand drive. It took me a long time to get the Department to understand that it was cheaper for us to buy a car in South Africa with right hand drive then to buy one in the U.S. with the steering wheel on the wrong side. When I first mentioned the difficulties of the car system, the Department volunteered to buy us right hand drive cars in Canada and ship them to us. But we calculated that it was just cheaper to buy them in South Africa. Finally, after much correspondence, I received

authorization to buy cars locally from GM. We would then fly to the factory and pick up our cars, either for the Embassy of the constituent posts. We would sometime take the new car and send our old one to the constituent post—we were just “breaking in” the new car. One time, we were due to receive a new car for the Ambassador—in those days, they were still mid-size sedans—from Canada. We sent one of our motor pool staff to Cape Town to pick it up from the docks. That was a long drive which required an overnight stop somewhere. Unfortunately, the driver rolled the car over; he was not hurt, but the car was totalled. So we had to wait another six months before another car was shipped. But in the meantime, I went to my friends in GM and got them to lend us a car while we waited for a new one. That made the Ambassador very happy.

Q: Do you recall what your impressions of State Department administration was by the time you completed your tour in South Africa?

SKOUFIS: I am hazy on that. My liaison with the Department was essentially through the Bureau of European Affairs. That Bureau was very supportive. With some effort, I managed to have FBO to include South Africa on its inspection tours of African posts. They had never visited South Africa after World War II, despite the fact that we had acquired some property with some surplus British local currency generated by lend-Lease and other assistance programs. FBO had never seen the properties; I don't know who bought them, but we had deeds of sale. Finally, Charlie Osborne came; he was the man in charge of the African region for FBO and he surveyed the properties. We were trying very hard to get a site for a new Embassy because we had reached capacity in the rented quarters that we were occupying. We had residences for the Ambassador, the DCM and for the Consul Generals in the constituent posts.

I think EUR gave us support because we were such a small operation compared to Paris, London or Rome and therefore didn't make many demands on it. I could generally get what I needed. My main discussions with Washington was about buildings which fell in the province of FBO. We needed to update some of the properties; the Ambassador wanted

a tennis court, etc. We wrote Washington—in those days, you never called. I conducted some business with Herman Pollack, who was the deputy Executive Director of EUR. He was always very helpful.

I might just finish the story of my promotions. You will recall that that was a very sore subject with me since I had been frozen at the same level for five years. After the assignment to Pretoria, that changed and I think I was promoted three times in one year to FSS-5. I also became “Wristonized” and became an FSO-4. The DCM gave me my oral examination. By that time, Ambassador Tom Wailes had arrived. He had been chief of personnel and Inspector General. It was a time of transition for the Department. Personnel was moved and given to Scott McLeod who became responsible for it, security and consular affairs. Wailes was a fine person to work for and was very helpful. Flake had left and the job was still empty when I left. Glen Wolfe came later to replace Flake. But while the DCM position was unfilled, I worked closely with the Ambassador and had a very good relationship with him.

Q: That brings us to 1955. You were then assigned to the Department.

SKOUFIS: I was slated to return to the Department after my Pretoria tour. I was one of the first overseas people to swap jobs with someone in the Department. That was a new program resulting from the Wriston Committee's work. I was assigned to be the deputy Executive Director in the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs. Pete Martin was the Executive Director. Scott McLeod was of course the Assistant Secretary. I replaced Margaret Fagan, who had been in the Department for many years; she had become an FSO and went to Geneva as a consular officer.

The assignment came out of the blue; I had not sought it and it came as a surprise. Wailes called me to his office one day and read me the cable that he had received about my next assignment. He said' “Pete, you have either done something wrong or something right. They want you to work in SCA!”. At that time, SCA was of course very controversial with

McLeod in charge. I had learned later that Fagan was so anxious to leave Washington that she got on the back of the personnel people to find a quick replacement and I was the first available. Furthermore, since we didn't have any children, we were the easiest people to move quickly—one or two weeks and we were ready to go. No kids in school; no impediments of any kind. Just pick up our few belongings and go. That occurred to us a couple of times during my service.

So I came back to Washington and went to work for SCA. I had to postpone my leave because there was a crisis of some sort at the time. I had very close contact with Scott McLeod. Bob Cartwright was his deputy and Harris Houston came later in the front office. They were all “outsiders”; they had worked for the FBI or in Congress. McLeod was a very strong personality. He was very interesting, very positive in his thinking. We all had to “sign in” in the morning and “sign out” at night, just as was done in the FBI starting in the J. Edgar Hoover's days. McLeod always wanted to know where you were. The executive office was one of the first you passed in the executive corridor; McLeod's office was at the end of the corridor. Gwen Lewis was his personal assistant. He was very supportive of the executive director's office; we leaned on him quite a bit. Most of our work had to do with security clearances and with people being fired. Dennis Flynn was in charge of the security operations. McLeod provided the political input.

We were hiring a lot of people for the Refugee Relief Program (RRP). Congressman Walters was the “god-father” of the program. Pierce Garrety was in charge of the RRP. The executive director office was to provide support for the new program. We had to deal with the congressional pressures. McLeod was a very political animal since he had worked as the administrative assistant to Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire. So he had a wide range of contacts on the Hill, none of whom ever hesitated to call him on an immigration or passport problem or if someone wanted a job with the RRP, which was one of the few activities in the Department which did not require Civil or Foreign Service status. We tried to facilitate operations. We could employ people for the RRP without going through the usual long and tedious security clearance process if the Secretary of State

was willing to issue a waiver. A number of our new recruits were needed immediately. It was up to our office to get all the paper work done for the waiver. First, we used to send to Ambassador Loy Henderson, who was then the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. Then we were instructed to bypass him and go directly to the Secretary. The waivers ended up in the hands of two very competent people in the Secretary's office: Bill Macomber, who was a special assistant at the time, and John Haynes. These two guys were the “spear carriers” for the Secretary on these issues. They would resist all the pressures that we put on to get one of these appointments through; it turned out that half or more of these appointments had been stimulated by Secretary Dulles; he would make a deal to bring the person on to the payroll. We would tell that to the special assistants and also tell them they should not get upset with the messengers. The problems were initiated in their own office. The whole process gave me a great insight into the politics of the Department; it was quite a revelation for a country boy from Maine to see how the power structure of the Department and the government as a whole really worked.

Pete Martin left the Service about a year after I reported to SCA. So I was the acting Executive Director, as an FSO-4 (soon to be moved down to FSO-5 when the grade structure was redone, although I was promoted back to FSO-4 a year later). It was an interesting assignment because it coincided with Scott McLeod getting into the middle of a fight between Frances Knight, Director of the Passport Office and Congressman John Rooney, chairman of the House's appropriations subcommittee which had jurisdiction over the Department's funds. The two just didn't get along. It was fascinating to be in the middle. McLeod was of course also involved, but he was more skillful than I was; he kept ducking and used to sent the problems to me because most of the issues dealt with the funding of the Passport Office—new offices, updated equipment, etc. That fight went on for years and even Loy Henderson became involved as Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. Miss Knight would take her case to him. Then she would go to the Hill to testify—I used to go with her because I was the Bureau's chief budget officer, which essentially meant that I would put a budget together based on the requests of the various

offices—Passport, Visa, Consular Services, Security, etc. My main role was to consolidate it all, run it through the Personnel and the Budget offices (Ed Crouch and Fred Irving) and then accompany the Office heads when they testified.

Miss Knight went one year and got into a confrontation with Rooney, which included name-calling. The issue was the New York Passport Office. Miss Knight wanted to fire some of the people in that office; it turned out that the people on her “hit” list were those that Rooney had put there. That was a prolonged dispute. As a result, Miss Knight refused to testify again; she wouldn't appear before Rooney and would send her deputy or someone else. Rooney would suspend the hearings; he wanted Miss Knight present. We would tell the Chairman that she wasn't coming; he would say “O.K., then there will be no hearings”. Then Mr McLeod would have to become involved. He would call Rooney and tell him that Miss Knight would no not show up. That allowed the Republicans to make some noise—Miss Knight was close to the Republicans on the Hill. Rooney would cut the Passport's Office request. For example, he would deny money for new electric typewriters for that Office. Those were the days when “automation” meant moving from manual to electric typewriters.

Then there was the issue of moving the Passport Office to a new location. Tom Estes, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations, got involved. We had to go back to see Rooney. Miss Knight didn't want to move out of the State Department's building, even if her staff had to move to the Maiatico Building. She finally was persuaded to move with her staff, but it took a lot of effort. After she got there and had been there for a while, the landlord wanted her out because she was such a nuisance. That was the life of the Executive Director; it was a tremendous education for me in the politics of the Department and trying to get along with a great variety of people.

Working for McLeod was sometimes a negative factor. But eventually, people began to understand my role, even though it included the very unpleasant task of firing people for security reasons. I would have to call Personnel to pass on the bad news. In Personnel,

the cases were handled by an officer by the name of Pete Szluk. We used to call him “the social conscience of the State Department”. He was the “hatchet man”. Any time Security developed an adverse case, it would be sent to us for review to make sure that all the appropriate offices and officials had been contacted to make sure that there were no special angles that we should be aware of. If Security felt that an employee had to be discharged, it was Pete Szluk who had to inform him or her. But the whole period was very unpleasant, although being part of the process wasn't too bad. Most of my role concerned getting various clearances from other offices around the Department. For example, if there was a problem in NEA, it would be my responsibility to discuss it with the Executive Director so that he would know what was going to happen. Most of the cases dealt with employees, but sometimes we would have difficulties with a proposed appointment. I used to represent the Bureau on the “Appointments and Assignments Board” which was run by Personnel. Every consular assignment had to be approved by SCA. There were a lot of them. We of course had a great interest in a lot of consular posts where the visa workload was very heavy, but there were a lot of assignments to small posts which were of no great consequence. As long as the officer passed security clearance, we really didn't care. Occasionally, we would object to an assignment.

We did have a significant problem, which resulted from the Wriston program. There were a number of officers who had been appointed in the early '30s and who had spent their whole careers in small consular posts overseas. There have been 20-30 of these officers. They were getting along in age and had reached the mid-career levels of the Service. Mr. Henderson and the Personnel Office felt it was time for these people to be assigned to Washington, as recommended by the Wriston Committee. But no Office in Washington wanted them. They didn't fit into the Regional Bureaus who had no positions for consular specialists. They weren't economists or politico-military or public affairs experts, so that the Functional Bureaus had no assignment for them. SCA had a few jobs, but not many, because most of our employees were Civil Servants who did not move from their jobs. They had not joined the Wriston program and were therefore immobile. They were not

forced to become available for world-wide service and they chose in fact to remain where they were. So they filled most of the positions that these Foreign Service consular people could have occupied. So I kept getting heat from Personnel and finally from Henderson's office to find jobs for these consular types. There weren't any in SCA. So we would go back to them and tell them that they had to produce assignments for them; we couldn't. There was pressure on us to get the Civil Service people to join the Wriston program so that they could be sent overseas. But we didn't really succeed to any major extent. There were no inducements; these people were not attracted by the emoluments of the Foreign Service. They had been in the Department for a long, long time and were satisfied to remain in their present positions. Some would stipulate that they would only go to certain countries; e.g. Canada. Sometimes, we might actually find a job in Canada for one of these people. We put a couple into Mexican border posts. But these assignments were few and far between.

Allen Donaldson was the head of the Office of Special Consular Services, which worried about protection and welfare of private American citizens abroad. There were a lot of “old timers” in that Office. The Director of the Visa Office was a Foreign Service officer, but below him were also a lot of “old timers”. The Passport Office wouldn't even consider any of the Foreign Service people. It did have a very small Foreign Affairs Section, but it may have had only three positions. Otherwise, none of the jobs in the Passport Office were considered suitable for Foreign Service people. The Wriston program didn't really work in SCA.

Q: Tell us a little bit of your relationship with Frances Knight.

SKOUFIS: I had an interesting relationship with her. In the first place, she viewed the world as “we” and “they”. It took me an awful long time to convince her that I didn't have any personal axes to grind and that when I said something, it was most likely to be on behalf of someone else—either Mr. McLeod or Mr. Cartwright. I had no personal interest in most of the requests or instructions. She appreciated that approach; she was an interesting

person in that respect. I would sometime go to the Passport Office and talk to some of her staff. She told very early in my tenure that she didn't want me to do that unless she knew what I was going to talk about. I had to see or talk to her first. Most of my dealings were on small issues such as getting necessary data so that I could put a budget together. I used to have to tell her that there was no possibility of getting her any money unless I had the supporting data. She finally understood that; she was after all a consummate bureaucrat. One of the problems was that most of the data was in the hands of an employee who had been employed by Mrs. Shipley, who was Miss Knight's predecessor. So Frances wasn't sure he could trust him. But Miss Knight and I developed a relationship which allowed me to call her from time to time if I needed to have something done. I figured there was no use calling her Office because she would be told of my call and would then phone me to ask why I hadn't gone through her. When I pointed out that my requests were often for trivia which wasn't worth her time, she would say that she didn't care what it was; she wanted to know what we in the front office were up to. So I would promise that I would call her the next time. Miss Knight had an assistant—Winnie Fitzsimmons—who did the personnel work for the Passport Office. We got along very well. Eventually, Miss Knight and I became good friends; whenever I would come home from an overseas assignment, I would drop in to see her. She always remembered that and used to say that I was the only person in the SCA front office that she liked. She felt that all the other people were against her.

Miss Knight had a very interesting relationship with Mr. Henderson. It had some conflict in it because of her relationship with Congress and particularly with Rooney and his colleagues. One time, Mr. Henderson himself called; usually the call would come from one of his assistants, Earl Sohm or Don Zook. They would tell me that Miss Knight had sent something to Mr. Henderson that probably had not been seen by the SCA front office. They would tell me that Mr. Henderson did not want to read it until it had gotten Mr. McLeod's approval. They would sent the paper back to me; I would then take it to McLeod and discuss it with him; he would then usually initial it and then we would return it

to Mr. Henderson's office. McLeod didn't really care; most often he just didn't want to get involved. He preferred to keep his head down when the firing began.

As I said, Loy Henderson called me one day wanting to know why I permitted Miss Knight to by-pass the SCA front office. He asked: “Are you not her boss?”. I told him that I was not and that Mr. McLeod was in charge of SCA. Henderson then told me he wanted McLeod to see a certain memorandum written by Miss Knight. I assured Mr. Henderson that I would see to it that Mr. McLeod would see it. One interesting aspect of the Knight-McLeod relationship was that both had the same base of political support. She was supported primarily by Senator Bridges, a Republican from New Hampshire, for whom McLeod had worked. She got the job in the Department in the first place through Bridges and McLeod's interventions. That is how she replaced Mrs. Shipley. Frances Knight also had a very good relationship with Sherman Adams of the White House staff. She could bring pressure to bear on the Department through that channel. She used that channel not infrequently. Then she had other Hill supporters.

Despite the fact that Miss Knight and McLeod had the same supporters, they were not good co-workers. We often wondered whether Miss Knight did not have aspiration to supplant McLeod. I was in SCA for three years, during which Mr. McLeod received an appointment as Ambassador to Ireland. Then the speculation was rife with Miss Knight being the leading candidate for the SCA Administrator's job.

There was another incident that is worth recalling. This dealt with a leak about Ambassador Bohlen being nominated to another ambassadorship. The question arose as to the source of the leak. Dulles and Eisenhower both were criticizedfor the nomination because there was some opposition to Ambassador Bohlen on the Hill. Bohlen had been Ambassador to Moscow and perhaps that was the reason for the opposition. In any case, there was some suspicion that it was Mr. McLeod who had leaked the nomination to the Hill. But to cover everyone's tail, we all had to sign a sworn statement that we were not the source of the leak. Anyone who had knowledge of the nomination—e.g. anyone who had

seen the agr#ment or anyone who had handled any papers relating to the nomination—had to sign such document. But it was all very embarrassing because of the suspicions about Mr. McLeod's involvement. The whole Bureau was scared that Mr. McLeod might lose his job because of this incident that had infuriated President Eisenhower. Dulles was embarrassed that Congress had gotten the word through a leak and even worse, may have been surreptitiously been informed by the Department's chief of security. The leaker was never found of course. But Mr. McLeod soon thereafter was appointed to Ireland. It was a very controversial appointment. The Senate was Democratic during the second half of Eisenhower's term. The Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee was William Fulbright and there was concern that he might block the nomination. It was a close call. My role was deliver documents to the various parties involved. Finally, the Committee was to vote and Mr. McLeod told me to go to stand in the corridor outside the Committee room and to call him if I picked up any information.

In fact, I did get some news. That was exciting. I got the word that Lyndon Johnson would vote for McLeod and that was the swing vote that made the difference. We learned later that Johnson had called McLeod to tell him that he was going to vote for him. That was politics; there may well have been a trade-off of some kind. After McLeod was confirmed, he started his preparations for the assignment during which he and the Foreign Relations Committee learned that some Irish farmer had a historical right to graze his live-stock on the grounds of the American Embassy in Dublin. The Embassy was on a large estate called Phoenix Park and apparently the farmer had been granted grazing rights or they may have come with the purchase of the estate. The farmer did pay a token sum for the privilege. Then the question arose concerning what had happened to the grazing fees. No one seemed to know who had received and how it was disposed of. There was a big to do and I was given the assignment to find out what had happened to that money. I went all over the Department and particularly EUR to find this miserly sum. We looked at all the books; apparently no one had ever recorded the fee as a receipt. What had happened of

course was that the farmer had paid the fee in cash and the Embassy had used as a sort of “slush” fund. In fact, the farmer was providing a service by keeping the grass short.

John Rooney got involved in the “scandal”. He raised the issue during one of our budget hearings. He wanted the money deposited in “Miscellaneous Receipts”. So thereafter, the small sum was duly credited to “Miscellaneous Receipts” like all other fees. There was a lot to do about a tiny sum.

Another time, I was on the Hill accompanying our SCA witnesses to some Rooney hearings. At the same time, the Senate was holding hearings on the question of the U.S. Representative to the U.N. and the apartment that was leased by the Department at the Waldorf-Astoria. That apartment cost $1,500 per month or $18,000 per annum. Secretary Dulles himself had to testify on this. The Committee Chairman, Lyndon Johnson, was having a lot of fun teasing Dulles about this “gross expenditure”. We learned later that this hearing was part of a pre-designed scenario. The Secretary had used a wrong figure during his testimony. Eddie Crouch, who was the Department's budget officer at the time, corrected the Secretary out loud. The Secretary turned around and asked: “Are you testifying or am I?” in very cold terms. Poor Eddie changed colors several times. His intervention was not worth it, but it changed Eddie's demeanor thereafter because he had been so embarrassed by the Secretary's comment. Of course, the U.N. Representative at the time was Henry Cabot Lodge who had already cleared the lease with his old friend, Lyndon B. Johnson. The hearings were just for show; the substance had been agreed to long before. It was a very expensive lease, although today that annual rent may be just enough to cover a week's costs.

As I said, I stayed in SCA for three years. I came to the conclusion that SCA in those days was not a manageable bureau. The constituent offices were too disparate. When I first came to the Bureau, the Personnel Office was part of it. As a matter of fact. when McLeod was appointed, he was also made the head of administration. George Wilson was McLeod's special assistant for personnel and he sort of ran the Personnel Office. The

head of Security was Denny Flynn. The consular sections were totally unrelated to either personnel or security. I didn't personally understand the security implications of consular work and why the two functions had to be together in one bureau. I believe they were put together as a matter of convenience. Administration was the first function to be taken away from SCA followed soon thereafter by personnel, with Tom Wailes being designated as Assistant Secretary for Personnel and Administration in 1954. What was left was called the Bureau of Inspection, Security and Consular Affairs. Later, in 1962, During Abba Schwartz' tenure, the security function was transferred out of the bureau and finally in 1977, the head of the Bureau became an Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs.

The Bureau was too disparate and too difficult to manage. There were too many layers above the Administrator and too many layers below him. The layers above him consisted of the assistant Secretary for Administration, the Under Secretary for Administration and the Secretary's Office. Everybody was in the act. It was very messy and not at all clear. McLeod functioned well only because of his strong political support. But there were problems in running the Bureau and in coordinating with other parts of the Department. I was not impressed by the efficacy of SCA although it was staffed with some very good people—Roland Welsh, the head of the visa office, Dennis Flynn, who had a very difficult job as head of the security office—he was there during most of the McCarthy period which was a tough times for them. I gained a great of deal of insight into how the Department worked, how various pressures were applied to it, how different parts of the Department interacted. That was probably my most valuable experience of my career in the Department partly because of the wide range of contacts I was able to make partly because what I was able to learn about the inter-play of forces. I became impressed by how the strength of an individual's personality influenced the operations of a particular office. If the head was a good operator, he was able to project a greater role for himself and his subordinates than might have been assumed by an organization chart. It was very interesting to observe and a good lesson to learn for an administrator. You could notice where vacuums occurred. For example, EUR was a very good bureau; it knew what it was

doing. When you went to EUR, you knew you were dealing with pros. NEA was good; Barr Washburn had a good team there. Africa was still then fragmented between EUR (the colonies) and NEA (North Africa), but in any case, we didn't have many consular people in African and therefore not many concerns. I don't remember much about ARA either nor FE. But I certainly was impressed with EUR, which led me eventually to getting an assignment in that region.

Q: After SCA, you went to Holland as Administrative Officer in 1958. How did that happen?

SKOUFIS: I was called one day by Personnel and asked whether I was interested in being assigned to The Hague. I had served three years in Washington. I was due for an overseas assignment. I had never indicated any preference for Holland. I had expressed an interest in going overseas since if I were to be in the Foreign Service, I should be abroad. I really didn't care much an assignment in Washington, although, as I said, the SCA assignment had been very interesting. McLeod went to Ireland and we had a new Administrator, Robert O'Connor, who had been one of Dulles' assistants. He ran it well, although he was not as skillful as his predecessor on political relationships.

So one day, The Hague assignment came open and Personnel asked me whether I was interested. I said that would be fine and off we went. I had to find a replacement for myself in SCA because that was the only way the Bureau would release me.

The Ambassador in the Netherlands was Philip Young, a political appointment who had been the Dean of the Graduate School of Business Administration at Columbia University when Eisenhower was President of that institution. Young was brought to Washington as the personnel director for the White House. He supervised the Civil Service Commission and was involved in all the high level appointments and in the development of the government's personnel policies. As a reward, he was later appointed as Ambassador to the Netherlands. The DCM at the time was Herbert Failes. By the time of my appointment I was an FSO-4.

The job had more substance than my job in Pretoria. Almost as soon as I arrived, I became involved in a building project because the U.S. government was in the process of building a new chancery. We had been tenants of the Shell Company in the “Essobau” since the end of World War II. The new premises were being constructed right downtown. It was completed about a year after I got there and we moved into the new building. It was a very lovely Chancery building.

We had an extensive agricultural program as well as a very active USIA program. Both required considerable administrative support. Our agricultural experts were involved primarily in expanding our markets for US agricultural products—selling chickens and chicken feed while buying tulips and bulbs from the Dutch. There were a lot of people running around Holland at the time on promotional efforts—wheat promoters, rice growers. All of these industries had regional promotional offices in The Hague, all under the umbrella of the Department of Agriculture.

We had two consular posts in Holland—Rotterdam and Amsterdam. We also had a big MAAG staff in Holland, primarily because of the NATO bases build up including port facilities for our ships and air bases in the western part of Holland. We provided administrative support to the MAAG until they outgrew us. It had a two-star admiral in charge and finally we just couldn't provide all the services they required. My job then became one of liaison between the MAAG and the Dutch Protocol Office which was responsible for privileges and immunities. Much of the day-to-day matters were handled by the MAAG itself, but we were able to use their APO and Commissary facilities. We were going to make sure that the Embassy staff would not be denied access to those facilities.

While I was there, the Department went through another of those “economy” drives. We came under pressure to cut down the cost of our operations. If you look at a map, you can put a dime on it and cover all three Dutch posts. So we had to cut one post. First of all, the Ambassador recommended that the MAAG be cut out; there was one in Denmark, one in Holland an one in Belgium. At his request, I found out that we had over a thousand military

people in these three countries. Those were days when flag-rank officers had military household staff, drivers, etc. The Ambassador wrote a long despatch; having been in personnel operations, he knew how to present a good case. He recommended that there be only one MAAG to cover all three countries, preferably stationed in Holland because it was the middle country. He didn't get any response for a while; then all of a sudden the whole world came down on us, primarily from the Pentagon which wanted to know what we were doing minding their business. We were accused of not “seeing the big picture” and not understanding why the MAAG were there. The Chief of Naval Operations came to the Hague; he was a good friend of the Ambassador. One day, we had a big staff meeting with the CNO. He said that he couldn't agree more with the Ambassador's logic, but that he was in charge of the U.S. Navy and had to find some place for the Navy people then stationed in Holland. He said he could send them to Kansas or California or Arizona or Maine, but all of his U.S. facilities were full and he had no other place to put them. He wanted to know what to do with fire trucks when there was no fire; you had to keep them because a fire might break out at sometime. And that is the way he asked us to look at the Navy people in the MAAGs; they had to be stationed somewhere and Holland was a good post. So we lost that battle in a hurry.

But the Department insisted that some savings be made. We had two Army teams in the Embassy: one was buying food in Holland for the troops in Germany and around Europe; they had about ten guys for whom we were providing space. We suggested that they not need to be stationed in The Hague; they could be in Germany and travel to Holland periodically. That suggestion brought the whole Army down on our heads. Then we suggested that a group from the Agriculture Department be eliminated. That was a plant inspection group, primarily for tulip bulbs, Years earlier, the Dutch used to export bulbs to the U.S. where they had be quarantined for a period in New Jersey. Some had been condemned and dumped into the ocean. The Dutch had already paid for the transportation and therefore incurred a substantial loss. That episode brought forth the idea of a pre-shipment inspection to be done in Holland. The Dutch were willing to pay and reimbursed

Agriculture for the cost of maintaining American inspectors in Holland. We didn't know of that arrangement; all we knew was that Agriculture as maintaining an American staff in Holland. So we learned that this arrangement had been agreed upon at a fairly high level and that it was cheaper for the U.S. to keep their inspectors in Holland than having them in the U.S. It also saved the Dutch from potential losses. Furthermore, as a spin-off, all the tulip beds on U.S. government property in Holland got new bulbs every year from the Dutch Tulip Growers Association. Same with the White House. So we didn't get anywhere with the suggestion of eliminating the American Agriculture inspectors in Holland.

There were all the sales associations that opposed any cuts. They kept pointing out the importance of agricultural sales to our balance-of-payments. So we couldn't get rid of the Wheat or Rice Growers Associations representatives. We were then left with only one option: closing a post. We hemmed and hawed and did a lot of work and concluded that Rotterdam was the best prospect. We couldn't close Amsterdam, which, although smaller and less significant in terms of consular workload, is really the capital of the Netherlands. The Queen's Palace was there; the Royal family had another palace there. For most people, Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands. The Hague was the seat of government, 25 miles down the road. We couldn't obviously close the Embassy and we had to keep Amsterdam because that was where the Queen lived. So it had to be Rotterdam.

We decided that when Rotterdam was closed we would move the consular operations to The Hague; that is why I was anxious to move some of the military personnel out of the Chancery. The consular operation was a sizeable one and a very busy one. There were a lot of Americans in the Netherlands—shipping and oil companies. The workload was substantial. ARAMCO had its headquarters in Holland at the time.

About a month after our recommendations were submitted—and the Ambassador was pleased that he had gotten this monkey off his back—Frank Molloy, then the director for the Office for Western European Affairs, came to The Hague. He called us into a

meeting behind closed doors and whispered: “The Department is not paying anything for Rotterdam. The Agency is paying for it all”. So Rotterdam had never cost the Department a single nickel. The Agency wanted it open because it could monitor all the incoming and outgoing shipments. For example, the Russians were buying oil there and shipping it home. Rotterdam was an important intelligence post for the CIA, which subsidized much of not all of the costs of maintaining that post. We all got a big laugh out of that revelation. We had struck out again! We of course knew that the Agency had operations in Holland; its headquarters were in the Embassy in The Hague. I knew who was a CIA man in the Embassy, but I didn't know their people in the consulates. I certainly didn't know anything about the funding arrangement for Rotterdam. I suspect that even the Ambassador didn't have full knowledge of all the CIA activities in Holland; he certainly didn't know about the Rotterdam arrangements. Although I was not involved, I understand that the same situation cropped up for Antwerp which was also supposed to close, but didn't because, as I understood it, of Agency financing. It was clear that in both cases, it was necessary to maintain a U.S. presence and that decisions to do so were made at relatively high levels of the U.S. government.

It was interesting how also I learned about the Rotterdam situation. We were housed in rented space on land that we owned and we were considering an office building. The Dutch government had been quite generous with us after World War II in terms of allocating space for our offices. All that we had occupied before the war had been blown up or lost in some fashion. But the Dutch made space available to us in downtown The Hague for the Embassy.

In Rotterdam, either the city or the national government provided some land at concessionary prices or perhaps even as a gift in gratitude for the role the U.S. played in World War II. The lot stood empty for many years and the Dutch were beginning to pressure on us to build on it; it was very valuable land right in the middle of the city which was growing around it. So while I was still in The Hague, an architect came over and developed a building concept. But Washington for some reason or other, backed off and

didn't build. We could never understand why nothing would move. The City of Rotterdam had given its approval to the architect's sketches. By the time I left in 1961, I thought for sure that we would build in Rotterdam. I learned later that there had been no intention to build there; we still haven't done so. I don't know what happened to the property.

Young's tour was up because the Republicans had lost the election and it was time for another U.S. government. John F. Kennedy was elected and the whole issue of reducing U.S. government expenditures in the Netherlands came to an end. It was all a big joke. We had lived with the suspense for such a long time. That and moving into the new building were the two major activities for those years.

All in all, my assignment to The Hague was very interesting. Soon after taking office, President Kennedy appointed John Rice to be the new Ambassador. He had been chairman of the Democratic Committee in Pennsylvania. He turned out to be a very nice guy. He was also very wealthy; he owned a big apple operation outside of Harrisburg—Biglersville. By the time he arrived, we were already settled in the new building. He was a very good Ambassador. The DCM was Dick Service, with whom I had a very good working relationship. He was John Service's brother (of McCarthy fame).

I was fortunate in The Hague in that I had a very good staff. In general, the staff there was very interesting. It was a very active post. The activities of the port of Rotterdam were growing by leaps and bounds, giving our commercial people a lot of work. Our agriculture exporters used it. Dupont established an operation there.

My principle challenges were the coordination of the administrative activities of the other agencies, making sure that we were providing the necessary support. With the move into a new building, we had to sort out all the support activities and make sure that all got what was necessary. We had of course the usual problem of discrepancy of treatment among personnel of various agencies. I had a good working relationship with the Agriculture Attach# (Bob Reid from Kansas), who had been the former editor of “Country Gentleman”.

He was also a political appointee and didn't have much of an understanding about U.S. foreign relations and the activities of the Foreign Service or even of the Agricultural Service. In those days, we had to get the other agencies' representatives to agree to a sort of contractual arrangement which spelled out all the services that the Embassy would render and the costs of each. Most of the other agencies would yell, but I could always go to Bob Reid, tell him about the calculations and an hour later he would call me to tell me that he had signed off on the dotted line. He used to say: “Gee, you guys charge a lot for going to the airport!”. Then we would get into a discussion whether it was cheaper for Agriculture to buy its own car and so on. But in the final analysis, he was a good guy and would agree to our estimates. We had a good relationship.

We had a couple of amusing incidents while I was in The Hague. One had to do with the consular office. My office was on the ground floor of the Chancery. One day, a nice lady walked into our building with a handful of U.S. government bonds that she wanted notarized so that they could be cashed. The receptionist was accustomed to sending anyone she could not deal with to the Administrative office which was right down the corridor from her. My secretary was out' so I came out of my office and introduced myself to the lady. She said that she wanted the bonds notarized. I told her that she would have to go to Rotterdam because there was no U.S. consular service in the Embassy. We didn't have any authorized notary nor the necessary stamps. She got mad as hell. I told her how to get to Rotterdam which was very easy because you could do it by trolley car at very cheap price. After pronouncing a few unkind words, she finally left. Later I got a call from Washington telling me that some Member of Congress was on the Department's back because some lady couldn't get any consular services from the Embassy, The Hague. Who ever called me wanted to know what all the people in the building were doing and why I couldn't put my name on a document. My answer obviously did not satisfy the caller. The Department was not much help. I finally had to get the Consulate General in Rotterdam to send me a seal; I had the exequatur on my wall which made me a consular officer of the United States. I felt that if I could have a stamp, I could do the rest legally.

The C.G. said that I had to have a record of fees, so I asked him for a page from his book, which I would send every time I collected a fee for services rendered. We finally worked it all out, but of course there was never another case when I needed the stamp. I don't know whether there is a consular operation now in The Hague so that they don't encounter the same situation as I did.

The other incident also concerned an administrative problem. We had a hard time getting a cafeteria into the new Chancery building. We couldn't find a concessionaire nor were we at all sure that we could afford one. The Department does not support activities of that kind. So we tried to find someone who would take on the task for whatever revenues there might be. In the old building, the Dutch employees all “brown-bagged” their lunches. The Dutch are pretty shrewd businessmen. One guy looked at the situation and decided that there wouldn't be enough revenues to make it a paying proposition; the Dutch employees were likely to continue to “brown bag” their lunches. We searched and searched and finally managed to convince Heineken Breweries to undertake the job. They found a caterer and they I am sure subsidized the operation. Our only requirement was to stock Heineken beer; in Holland, of course, beer is like Coca-Cola anywhere else; everybody drank it. It never occurred to me that beer might not be eligible for consumption on government property. The brewery did a fine job; the cafeteria ran well. The Dutch employees continued to “brown bag” their lunches, but at least now they had an alternative and the Americans had a convenient eating place. There was one further problem: in the rented quarters, a milkman used to come around to deposit bottles of milk on the desk of the Dutch employees. This was not uncommon in office buildings; the Dutch also drank milk as we drink Coca Cola. Of course, Heineken promoted its beer and people would go down to the cafeteria and bring it back to the office or drink there whenever they felt thirsty. One day, a visiting American came to one of our offices and found one of the local employees with a bottle of beer on his desk. That got back to the Department in a hurry; I think the visitor must have written saying that people in the American Embassy in The Hague sat around their desks drinking beer all day. Needless to say, I heard from

the Department in no uncertain terms and that brought an end to the beer drinking on government property. It also brought an end to the cafeteria because Heineken was not going to subsidize the operation if their product could not be made available to the clientele. We did manage to keep a snack bar going, although I am not sure of the final outcome because all this happened as I was about to leave The Hague. I wished them luck. This story was just an illustration of how difficult it was to get the Dutch to change their habits.

Q: Was the Embassy well integrated, with all these various U.S. government agencies being represented?

SKOUFIS: Yes. The Ambassador worked hard on this problem as Dick Service. We used have meetings with all agencies being represented. The programs were pretty well coordinated.

We had a major ceremony when the new Chancery was opened. A lot of VIPs showed up. We also used to have an annual Fourth of July party in Rotterdam, with fireworks and other extravagances. ESSO and other American firms used to pay for this; the Embassy organized the activities. For example, we would get an Army band from Germany. The whole American community would work together on such activities and it worked quite well. One year, we also had the Brussels' World Fair. We gave our Embassy there as much support as we could helping them procure in Holland items they could not find in Belgium.

On the whole, The Hague was a very interesting assignment. The new building worked out well. We had some problems which was the result of poor planning. I have never throughout my career been completely satisfied with the FBO operation. I don't remember who was in charge at the time. The new building was developed by a well known architect, Marsall Breuer. He was a well known German architect—he belonged to the Bauhaus school, like Gropius and others. He had designed the IBM building and others in Holland.

He had won the contract through competition from FBO. I thought that there were a couple of glaring errors. For example, in Holland, it rains at least 350 days out of the 365 in a year. If you came to the Embassy, you had to get out of a car and walk up six or seven steps in the rain to the entrance level. So everyone who came to the Embassy got wet. When they left, they waited inside the building until a car came and then they had to rush down the wet steps; some slipped on the slick marble.

That was one of the design problems. The other was that there was no freight elevator because the original design assumed that the mail and code rooms would be on the ground floor, along with the administrative offices. The security people became concerned about this configuration; they weren't happy about sensitive operations like the code and mailrooms being on the ground floor. As the Chancery was being built, there was an incident somewhere in which one of our code rooms was sacked and burned. So after construction had started, the security people demanded that the mail and code rooms be on the top floors. Of course, it was too late to install a freight elevator. So the Dutch postman would just deposit the sacks of mail in the lobby—we wouldn't let him go above the ground floor for security reasons and I doubt whether he would have in any case—, requiring our people to come down from the top floor and drag them upstairs. It was these small annoyances that were a problem; we had to a lot of rebuilding even after we moved in to put in secure areas and separate such things as the classified mailroom from the unclassified mailroom. I remember these incidents very vividly because the Canadians were building their Chancery at the same time. They were more intelligent than our FBO operation; they called our security office in for expert advice and used it to design their building. So here we had two buildings going up practically side by side; the Canadian one, using our security expertise had minimal problems. We, not using the same expertise during the design period, had a lot of scrambling to do after the building was completed. Actually, our security people only got involved late in the game when the regional security officer from Bonn dropped in one day and told us that some of our plans just wouldn't be approved. He was instrumental in persuading the Department to move the code and

mailrooms upstairs. I supported him; I just wish the security concerns had been taken into account before the final design had been approved. The Canadians did it the right way; I used to walk through their building while it was under construction. Of course, after it was finished I couldn't go into their secure areas. I had good relationships with my Canadian counterpart.

Q: After The Hague, you went to the Inspection Corps. How did that happen?

SKOUFIS: When I left The Hague, Ambassador Rice was in charge. I had a good relationship with him. One day, I got a call from Washington telling me that the Inspection Corps wanted me. It came out of the clear blue sky. I had no indication that this would be my fate. During my tenure in The Hague, I must have been inspected a couple of times; I also received a promotion to FSO-3. I said OK to the Inspection Corps having learned a lot about it from the teams that had been in The Hague. During one of these visits, I may well have been asked whether I would be interested and I may have indicated that I would be. I was an ideal candidate; we had no children and therefore we were not tied to any school schedule. I could take my wife with me on the inspection trips. It was cheaper to have her with you than having to pay for housing in Washington.

I was supposed to report to the Inspection Corps at the beginning of a calendar year, after having been assigned in September, 1961. I was to be part of a new group that started in 1962. But before leaving The Hague, I got a call from the Inspection Corps telling me that one of their inspectors—Ed Wilson—had been taken ill. He was scheduled to go to the Far East with Bill Flake—the same man who had been my boss in South Africa. I was instructed to go to Paris and join the Inspection team there. I was to work one month with that team and then go directly to Vietnam —via Washington—to join Flake in the inspection of our Embassy in Saigon. The stop-over in Washington gave me a chance to buy two summer suites at Schwartz Brothers in Baltimore. I was given the Foreign Service Inspector's manual to read on the plane to Saigon. Of course, in those days, it took a long time to reach Vietnam. The people in Washington wished me “Good luck!”.

And that was my baptism into the Inspection Corps. I left Helen in Paris with our car; I told her to catch up with me somewhere along the line, which she eventually did. She brought the car and our other worldly goods home; she got them stored; she got the car garaged and then eventually we were reunited in Vietnam. We inspected our posts there and then went to Cambodia and after that, to Korea. We did these three countries from the end of October until around Christmas time when we finally came home. It was a very interesting experience. Vietnam was not quite yet at the height of hostilities, although we already had a large military advisory group there. Our Ambassador was Fritz Nolting and Francis Cunningham was the DCM. We just felt that there would be more activity in Vietnam; the U.S. build up was evident.

Our Ambassador in Cambodia was Bill Trimble. Our Ambassador in Korea was Sam Berger with Marshall Green being his deputy. Seoul was an interesting post with the country trying to recover from a devastating war. It was the first time I had been back in the Far East since having served there in World War II. I was the Administrative Inspector. I don't think the inspections were particularly profound. The administrative operations in Vietnam were very well supported by the military who had already sent their logistic people. As I said, the military was expanding; they were renting or buying housing for their own people. The Embassy was just trying to hang on to whatever they could. Henry Sabatini was the Administrative Counselor. He had a large team, particularly in the General Services' area, but he was overwhelmed by the military presence. They were very useful to the Embassy since they had already set up such operations as car repairs shops. If anything was lacking, the military could procure them; they had daily resupply flights. Of course, the U.S. military presence in 1961 was only a fraction of its later operations, but it was already substantial.

Cambodia was a much smaller post, which had no special problems. The Embassy's relationship with the government was not very close.

Q: Tell us a little about your views of the Inspection Corps as a management tool.

SKOUFIS: I was in the Inspection Corps for three years. In the second year, I went to India, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In the third year, I went to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and northern Italy. In retrospect, I don't believe that the Inspection Corps was not a very effective tool; it was good as the “eyes and ears” of the Department since we could report back on the sensitivities and feelings and relationships that we encountered in the field. Probably our most contribution came from dealing with any special problems to which we were alerted or which we encountered. The Department would brief us before departure on these special problems and would also alert us during the inspections through a special communications channel that we had. These problems might involve a break down in substantive reporting or some personnel problems or the lack of administrative services to other agencies. It seemed to me that we were able to make a contribution to these special issues simply by highlighting them in our inspection reports. we had of course no assurance that by including these problems in our reports, any effective actions would be taken subsequently either by the post or the Department. The follow-up system during this period was practically non-existent. The post was required to report back in a period of time what it had done about the Inspectors' recommendations. But there was no rigorous follow up; there was no central authority to police actions taken. The breakdown occurred in part because we were not sure for whom we were working. Were we working for the Inspector General? Or the regional assistant secretary? Or the Secretary? or the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration? We were not sure who the end users of the reports really were. That fundamental issue had not been sufficiently developed. Later, greater efforts were made to coordinate the implementation of the inspectors' reports. But in 1961-64, there wasn't much follow-up; only the special situations were handled.

We did in those days write up efficiency ratings on every American at a post which ended up in their personnel files. I thought that this was a vicious system. It was very hard to write a balanced efficiency rating. I would go into a code room. In India, there may have been as many as thirty employees working on shifts. I did not feel that I was at all remotely

qualified to attest to the efficiency of any of these code room clerks. I spoke with each of them; they all had an opportunity to tell me any problems that they might have or about their hopes for future assignments. I would take notes so that I could incorporate their views in my personnel or efficiency reports that I would make. That was easy enough. But to comment on the employee's effectiveness I had to rely on the supervisor which would just be a repetition of what the supervisor had or would be including in the employee's annual efficiency rating. We didn't have access to any reports that might have been filed in the Department, so that we were essentially starting with no background on the individual. To write a balanced efficiency rating under these circumstances was very difficult. It was easier to reach a judgement on the role that the Administrative Counselor played or on the effectiveness of the administrative section as a whole based on comments of other members of the Embassy. You could also judge the Administrative officer from the amount of information he or she had about the administrative operations. That was easier to do, but to pass judgment on an individual employee of a section, that was very hard. The communications sections gave me particular difficulties. Korea had a big communications section. I could observe the supervisor relatively well; you could get a feel for his effectiveness from talking to members of the staff and therefore my conclusions had some support. But for the staff members themselves, I had to write some very wishy-washy reports that couldn't help the employee; I just hoped it didn't do him or her any harm. I really didn't feel that I contributed anything with the individual staff efficiency reports. This whole issue became the subject of discussion among the inspectors. We got the system changed the following year. We were told not to write anything that wasn't needed; if we had read any recent reports and could confirm that the reports was generally accurate, then nothing further needed to be said. We were just requested to confirm what had been previously written. Of course, that wasn't much help either. So I was very frustrated by this aspect of the inspection work. The process may not have been as fatal in the administrative side as it was on the substantive side because the competition among the substantive officers was a little keener than it was among the administrative types—I may be wrong on that, but that was my feeling.

I also handled consular operations on a couple of the inspections. In the first year, I went with Bill Flake, as I mentioned. Then I inspected the consular operations because he had his hands full with political, economic and politico-military issues and personnel. The consular operations in Vietnam, Cambodia and Korea were relatively easy because there wasn't any massive workloads. Most of the work concerned “war babies” and American services; much of the work was done by the private social services agencies. But when we got to India, Sam Boykin, the senior inspector, reviewed the consular operations because he had at one time been the consular affairs office in the Department. So he knew a lot about the work and the people and said he would like to do that inspection. Sam didn't have as much background in political and economic work and therefore spent most of his inspection time on consular operations. In any case, in India, I had my hands full with a sizeable administrative section (Joe Donelan was the Counselor for Administration); same in Iran and Afghanistan. In many of the other inspections, I did the consular operations for which I had some background in light of my work in SCA. I did not think we did a very thorough job on consular operations, but the potential for an inspector doing damage was far greater than for doing any good. I was always aware of that pitfall and tried to be very careful. As a consequence, I may not have been as effective as inspector as I might have been. I did not see my role as that of a gumshoe. I did the best I could within limits.

What I did find out about the system was that in terms of identifying quality staff in the Foreign Service, one could walk into an Embassy and in a very short time know who were “the boys in the white hats”. These were people who would rise in the ranks—officers and staff employees who were “comers”. You knew that these people would move up in their Service; you could spot the potential Ambassadors in very short order. You could spot an employee in General Services and know that he or she would be an Administrative Counselor one day. You were seldom wrong. I was on a team that went to Yugoslavia, were Bob Cleveland was the Economic Minister and were Larry Eagleburger and Jim Lowenstein were FSO-4s. You felt that they would rise in the ranks; they were moving fast. They were guys in “the white hats”.

Then you could identify the people who were going nowhere—"the black hats". They were five-eight percent of the staff. The group in the middle were "the gray hats". There were a lot of them. There ten percent "white hats", eight percent "black hats"; the rest were all "gray hats". That was a pretty good evaluation of the Foreign Service. I found that picture to be true even after I left the Inspection Corps and went on to other jobs. I had experiences as administrative officer with a couple of hotshots who worked for me, a few who weren't going anywhere and the majority in the middle. That carried over to the kind of backstopping we, the administrative officers at an Embassy, would get from Washington. In some instances, the support was excellent; in some instances, not so good. That was my experience at least. For example, when I inspected some of the Iron Curtain countries, I had the impression that a disproportionate amount of the European Affairs Bureau resources went to Paris, London and Rome and less to Warsaw, Poznan, Belgrade, etc. It is true that this was marginal, but you could detect it. It took longer for people to get things done behind the Iron Curtain. Some was due to the Washington inertia, but probably much was due to the local situation, which did not attract the same kind of caliber American personnel as the big Western European capitals. The reasons are easily understandable. Except for the language officers, most people preferred Western Europe. The general proposition was also true for other geographical areas. New Delhi attracted a higher quality personnel than Kabul did. The same with Iran. Iraq was a holding operation; the caliber was not great.

The large number of employees in the middle category were quite acceptable. They put in a good day's work every day, but they would never shine. They were adequate at "holding the fort". But it was clear that they would not rise in the ranks very far. They were obviously not "comers". You learned a few techniques in the Inspection Corps. One was to keep a pad with you as you went about your work. At the end of the day, you would note the names of those you met whom you thought were pretty good, why you thought they were good. You did the same for the bad employees. You kept these notes as a reference point. I was told by a couple of the experienced inspectors that these notes would prove

very useful once you left the Inspection Corps because although you might tend to forget the names of the people you met, they would tend to remember you because you were probably the only inspector they met in a particular post. In later assignments, a certain individual may be nominated for your section and you could always refer back to your inspection notes to get a feel for who he or she was. If the notes were too negative, you could always try to get the assignment changed and have another individual assigned to your section. That was one of reasons I described the system as vicious, but that is what inspectors did do at the time. I don't think that is true anymore, but it was a common practice certainly in the early 60s.

You have to remember that this was a period when administration in the Department was going through a new phase. Crockett was first the Assistant Secretary for Administration and then the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. There was a new emphasis on administration in the Department and it was improving tremendously. There was more feedback; there was a more positive attitude to solving some of the administrative problems we were facing. The resources may even have been increased. I had the impression that most posts were getting what they wanted in terms of financial resources from the Bureaus. We did face the usual problems of travel freezes—the kind of actions that had a real impact on the Service and particularly people at hardship posts, like the Eastern European posts. There an officer would get his orders one day and be gone the next. Then the post would wait for the replacement, which could take four to six weeks because the replacement was not in any hurry, unless he or she was a Eastern European specialist, or the family had to wait for the kids to get out of school. The officer in Poznan or anywhere else in Eastern Europe didn't care what time of year it was; he would get his kids out of school and be gone home. We saw that frequently as we inspected these Eastern European posts.

The Department's briefings for the inspectors were excellent. Each time before we left we were briefed and then we had another discussion with the bureau when we returned. As I said, bureaus became much more responsive to the field's needs in the early 60s

than they had been previously. I think that was the result of the new vitality that was being built into the administrative program. The Washington offices seemed to me to become more responsive. There were problems such as travel freeze which I described earlier. But there was an effort made to become more understanding of the problems of the field. The Wriston program had worked well in that respect. The employee in the Department who back-stopped a field post had been there; he or she understood the problems better, greatly improving the quality of the administrative support the field received from Washington. Rotation between the field and Washington was beginning to show some pay-offs in the early 60s.

I was somewhat concerned by the establishment of regional offices. I considered that in many cases this was layering. I never fully agreed with the need, for example, to have a regional communications officer or a regional security officer in Beirut who would travel through their region periodically to observe operations at various posts. Maybe it was important for the regional bureau because they could put an experienced officer in one of the regional positions. He would be available to help the less experienced officer at a post. That may have helped. Nevertheless, I thought the concept was essentially layering —more bureaucracy, making the work at a post a little more difficult because there was always a watch dog coming to look at operations. Every regional officer I knew always made sure to get to a post just before the inspectors did. So when you would ask someone why he or she was doing things a certain way, the answer would invariably: “Well, the regional officer was here two weeks ago and that is what he suggested”. We ran into that frequently. Then you would have to wonder why you had inspectors. Then if you went to Beirut, for example, you would have to inspect the regional operation. You couldn't really evaluate the officer because all he did was to travel around his region. How could you write a report on that operation?

Q: You mentioned earlier the improving quality of the support that the administrative people in the field were receiving. Did the good administrative people really care about Washington's support?

SKOUFIS: It was important for field personnel to keep good relationships with their Washington counterparts. At least, that was my philosophy. I found it useful to have a good relationship. That is not an answer to your question. I think you were asking whether there were not some administrative officers who wouldn't make a move without Washington's blessing whereas others moved out and would accept the consequences of their actions. I found a number in each category. The ones that took action as they deemed appropriate were on the whole the more successful types. For example, Joe Donelan was one of that group. He was the administrative counselor in New Delhi when I inspected that post. He really got things done in that Embassy under very difficult circumstances. He had a very difficult relationship with the DCM; it was not Joe's fault as we tried to document. I think the new spirit in the early 60s encouraged people to take initiatives; it certainly did not inhibit independent action.

I did however note the lack of Washington concern for the living conditions at some of the posts which I inspected. In New Delhi, the assistance program had helped to develop an air conditioning industry—it may have been Carrier or some other major manufacturer. The AID warehouse was full of these Indian produced air conditioners and they were giving them to their own employees as well as schools and other Indian facilities. Therefore, when you went to an AID employee's house, you would find an air conditioner in the living room, the bedroom, etc. A State employee's house, particularly in the constituent posts, would have only one air conditioner per occupied bedroom. That was the State rule imposed by Washington (FBO, I guess). The rule was probably alright if it been applied to all American employees in India. AID was practically giving them away, but the Embassy could not cut through the Department's red tape. Joe was very active in trying to get the Department to change its rules. He had good relationships with the AID staff and therefore

acquired the extra air conditioners for the State people. It took a lot of work on his part to get that accomplished. The Department resisted for a long time because it was wedded to its worldwide standards. It wouldn't make an exception for a unique situation in which air conditioners were plentiful and probably free, or at least very cheap. It was not like Thailand or Vietnam. I remember very clearly getting a message from the Department telling me that State had a worldwide rule which it was not willing to break under any circumstances; that policy called for air conditioners to be available only in bedrooms.

Q: Was New Delhi unique? Was that the only post you found at which people from different agencies were being treated differently?

SKOUFIS: We did find that situation in other posts as well. AID and USIA both had better housing facilities in some places. I have often thought that the U.S. government would be better served if all civilian Americans serving overseas were under a single personnel system. We were too fragmented. The concept that the State contingent was the first among equals was not accepted overseas, both on the substantive side and the administrative side. The clever administrative officer was noted by the extent to which he was able to obtain goods and services from other agencies for the State employees. The less skillful went by the book. Marshall Jones was the Administrative Counselor in Korea; he could get anything he wanted from the military. If the Ambassador's lawn needed to be cut, he could get the Army to do that. For the Fourth of July parties, they would set up the tents on the Ambassador's lawn. Jones had no problems at all which was a tribute to the skills he had in using the resources of other agencies to support the State Department programs. Joe Donelan in India, as I said, had similar skills. It is true of course that the administrative counselor could and did use his office to support other agencies, but the effective ones made sure that the support went both ways. The other agencies in general had more resources than State.

On the personnel side, it would not be accurate to generalize on the level of competence of each agency. There were good people in the staff of all agencies; there were bad people in the staff of all agencies. It varied from post to post.

One thing that I learned from my tour in the Inspection Corps was that the U.S. government's interest was best served when all of its overseas representation was served by one joint administrative operation and that was particularly true if that operation was a good one. We inspected a number of posts where there wasn't any joint administrative effort. I always thought that this was a waste of resources. There was a lot of duplication at such posts. All agencies had administrative staffs, primarily to worry about their program funds. They had to budget for those funds and account for them. That was alright; that was a distinct and separate function which was best handled by each agency. But for the services that were required by all agencies, I fully support the concept of a single joint administrative operation. I think it works. The difficulty was primarily in convincing the active heads of other agencies to accept the concept. I say “active” because although a lot of those people gave lip service to the country team concept, many ran their own operations without coordination with the Embassy, in any way they wanted. Their actions may or may not have conformed with Embassy views and policies, but that is the way they felt that their Washington headquarters wanted them to operate. The inspectors would report on situations of this kind. Some ambassadors and DCMs would raise the issue with the inspectors.

Sam Berger, our Ambassador in Korea, used to hold country team meetings. The U.S. military would be represented by a number of generals. When he walked into that meeting, everybody stood up. That was impressive; you obviously felt that he had made an impression and that there was no question about who represented the U. S. government in Korea. It was Sam Berger, not a general; he was the President's representative. He did primarily through the force of his personality and the way he ran his mission. On the other hand, our Ambassador in Vietnam, Fritz Nolting, somehow didn't have the same

capability. You had a feeling that the Army was running away with the situation in Vietnam. They probably were! The Embassy was quite sensitive to the problems of dealing with the government of Vietnam, but you had the feelings that that government was going off on its own and that only our military could rein it in. It scared the hell out of me when I was there. Berger went to Vietnam later as a super-DCM to see whether he could get the situation under some control; I don't know how he did, but it was clear to me when I was in Saigon that the Embassy needed someone like Berger who could restrain both the Vietnamese government and our own military.

There is no doubt in my mind that the American ambassador is the senior U.S. representative in a foreign country, even if there was a large presence of U.S. military. That is basic to our concept of government—civilian control of military.

Q: In 1963, you finished your assignment to the Inspection Corps. You then went to the Personnel Office. What were your duties there?

SKOUFIS: While we were inspecting the posts in Northern Italy, I got a phone call and a cable from the Department informing me that the Office of Personnel was being reorganized and expanded. A new Director had been appointed—Bernie Rosen—who had come to the Department from the Civil Service Commission. Among the new innovations, was the establishment of a career management concept. The idea was to have experts in the various Foreign Service specialties to assist in the assignment process so that career patterns could be developed for each employee. I was asked to take the job as career management officer for the administrative “cone”. Those were the days when we became very “cone” conscious. My immediate supervisor as Earl Sohm.

I didn't finish the northern Italy inspection. I was instructed to report to the Department immediately. Joe Eggert had been in the position and he was being assigned to an overseas position. I worked as a career management officer for a little more than a year. I found it interesting, but very frustrating. The Office of Personnel was not in Main State,

but a block away in the Civil Service Commission building. It was very difficult to get this concept of career management off the ground; career management officers were primarily used to index the skills of the Foreign Service. That is what I basically did for my year. I did have an opportunity to talk to all the administrative people when they returned from their overseas assignments. That helped me to develop a profile on each—where they had been and where they wanted to go. I tried to make an assessment of their potential for rising in the Service. I had a large clientele—general services officers, personnel officers, communicators, etc. It gave a further insight into the Foreign Service, but I am not sure that the career management concept was viable in terms of improving the careers of the Foreign Service people. It was a good experiment since it permitted us to get a good inventory of the skills available to us.

In 1963, the deputy Under Secretary for Administration was Bill Crockett. The Director General in 1963 was Tyler Thompson; a few months later Joe Palmer was appointed to that position followed by John Steeves. The Director of Personnel was Bernie Rosen. He had some good thoughts; he was a professional personnel officer. he brought a fellow by the name of Walt Jacobson with him. Their assignment was to install a personnel system in the State Department which would be able to deal with the uniqueness of the Foreign Service. They tried hard to put the personnel operations on a sounder basis, but I am not sure that they were very successful.

Q: As you mentioned, the early 60s saw an emphasis on the "cone" system which stressed the objective of managing the Foreign Service by specialties. This is a concept that has been debated vigorously in the Department for many years. Do you have any views about this issue—the "generalist" vs. the "specialist"?

SKOUFIS: First of all, let me say that the pendulum in the State Department swings widely from time to time. When a new idea takes hold, it is pushed to extremes; then over a period of time, it returns to the center when it becomes effective. In the matter that you have raised, I think there has been an over-emphasis on "specialization". I didn't feel that

the system needed to be as rigid as it was being developed in 1963. It seemed to me that artificial corridors were being built and people were being forced to walk in those corridors even as they progressed in the Foreign Service and expanded their experiences. My conclusion was that a good “generalist” could manage almost all the jobs in the Foreign Service. I might have made an exception for economists because that required some depth of expertise, although I also felt that sometimes that was overemphasized. But over-all, I felt that good “generalists” should be the back-bone of the Foreign Service. Their availability was the most effective of managing a post and handling our foreign relations. My view is supported by the view that our system provides for non-career ambassadors; some of them have had little applicable foreign relation experiences, but in general the majority of the political appointments have worked out just fine.There is a role for certain special skills in the Department and the Foreign Service. But those, if they can't be provided from within the Service, can be hired from other agencies; that has been done on a number of occasions—the commercial officers who came from the Department of Commerce, the financial attach#s from the Department of the Treasury. But on balance, I conclude that the over-emphasis on “specialists” has not been to the advantage of the Foreign Service. I would prefer a Foreign Service of “generalists” with some geographical area experience as contracted to a rigid system of “specialists”.

Q: You referred earlier to the “pendulum swings” in the Department's management. Tell us more about your views of the consequences of this style of management?

SKOUFIS: It can be demoralizing in many ways. Some people gained from this situation; others lost. The people that lost were more numerous than those that gained in terms, for example, of assignments. The periodic shift from one extreme to the other demoralized people; after a while, they didn't believe that the system would work to their benefit. It isn't of course necessary that systems work to the benefit of employees, but they must have some trust in it. In the case of State, the system didn't even work for the benefit of the organization. As a result, you ended up with chaos; there were vacuums created when the pendulum swung. Other people moved into the vacuums, despite a theoretical centralized

personnel system. The continual vacillation between centralization and decentralization of personnel responsibilities created an opportunity for the regional bureaus to take control and therefore in the final analysis, an officer's assignment pretty much dictated and controlled by the regional bureau. It was those bureaus that were interested in a particular employee and provided him or her with a job. The bureaus held the upper hand over the central personnel office. Often these bureaus had strong executive directors and it seemed to me that they took advantage of the inability of the system to maintain a steady course and to develop.

When I was in Personnel, assignments were made by boards. The Career Development Office was one of three or four offices that were represented on the board. There were representatives from the Personnel Office's geographic divisions, from the regional bureaus and probably some others. We tried to accommodate the needs of the Department with the wishes of the employee. The Career Management process raised false expectations. A Foreign Service officer would come in to talk to one of the career counselors and usually had expectations far beyond his or her capabilities. But once those expectations were put on record with a career counselor, the officer undoubtedly felt that his or her wishes would be met. Of course, in many cases, the assignments that the officer had anticipated never materialized because there were better qualified candidates. It was not up to us to evaluate his or her performance; we of course had access to the evaluation files, but we never put anything in those files that might come to the attention of the selection boards. So it seemed to me that the career management process raised false expectations. That created problems both for the central Personnel Office and the regional bureaus.

Q: By the mid-60s, you had experience in both a bureau in the Department and in the central Personnel Office. Did you develop any views about a central assignment process in contrast to one managed by the various operating bureaus?

SKOUFIS: I did give that question considerable thought. I concluded that the operating bureaus should have the assignment responsibility. In the first place, the bureaus had the responsibility for the management of their overseas posts. For example, if a bureau was assigned an officer that it didn't want, it could hold up the whole process by just saying that no further assignments could be made to a particular post because the bureau was running short of financial resources. Or it would say that it already had too many people. There were all sorts of games that the bureaus, which controlled the financial resources, could play. They were in the driver's seat when it came to personnel assignments. So it seemed to me that the bureaus should also be responsible for assignments as contrasted to a highly centralized assignment process. I didn't believe that a centralized system would have sufficient wisdom. I know that my view creates problems because that means that there will always be people who are unassignable because of their reputations. That is a major problem. A centralized system could force bureaus to take these people, despite the bureaus' efforts to the contrary. But I don't think that outweighs the advantages of a decentralized assignment operation.

The functional bureaus had a serious problem being assigned officers whom they wished to have. We had to work very hard to provide manpower to those bureaus. Fortunately, the regional bureaus were limited in the number of positions they could have so that they couldn't have all of the people they wanted. I ran into that problem later when I worked in the Secretary's office. The functional bureaus had a problem, but I did not think it was insurmountable. There were enough people in the system to provide everyone's quantitative needs, at least. We had no problem in SCA because we could draw from the pool of consular officers. The major problems were CU (Cultural Affairs) and INR (Intelligence and Research). In the final analysis, they got staffed, although sometimes to the unhappiness of the officer concerned who had different expectations. Neither bureaus were considered a “plum” unless you were an area specialist and could pursue your interests in INR.There was a lot of bargaining over assignments when I worked in Personnel. That was part of our tasks—to work out these assignments with the regional

bureaus before the decisions were to be made by the Assignment Panels. Almost all the time, the regional bureaus got their wishes in terms of specific individuals. We had to be careful of “cronyism” which is a real bugaboo in the Foreign Service. Certain bureaus had their favorite candidates—people who had worked in those bureaus for many years and had become members of their “regional clubs”. New officers had a hard time breaking into these “clubs”. Sometime you had to fight the whole system in order to get an officer to a particular position, if he or she were not identified with the controlling “club”. There were a lot of “clubs”. The other side of that coin is of course that the “club' members became real experts in a particular region or function which was considered by some as the real strength of the Foreign Service. So from the point of view of the Service, the continued assignment of the same officers to the same area was a plus because they developed real expertise—language, culture, etc. Those officers served us well, especially in such places as the Iron Curtain countries during the Cold War. We were probably well served by these specialists also in the Far East. But during the year I was in Personnel, the Foreign Service did not expand; as a matter of fact, during my thirty years in it, the Foreign Service grew, but it was incremental. When financial resources became scarce, the system tightened up a little, which made it more difficult for an officer to break into a new area or to become an expert in a new function. During my inspection tours, I became acquainted with a number of officers who had spent almost their entire career in Southeast Asia: India, Afghanistan, Ceylon. They were excellent people who later on took on jobs of greater and greater responsibility. From my perspective, I think it is better to have people who have deep knowledge of an area or function rather than having a generalized world-wide knowledge. It served our needs better.

Q: In the year 1963-64, you had an opportunity to evaluate the administrative talent in the Foreign Service. What were your views on the Department's competence in that area?

SKOUFIS: I came away from that experience with a feeling that the system was in pretty good hands. On the whole, the administrative types in the Foreign Service were pretty competent. Obviously, there were some better than others, but in general we were well

staffed. One reason might have been that we were bringing in some outside talent during this period. We had an active recruitment process for good budget and fiscal officers, for example. We had a steady stream of new administrative people coming into the system; I thought that was a pretty good program. I got some pretty good insights into the available talents by writing the profiles on the people I interviewed. All in all, my year in Personnel was a very useful year. I think I got more out of the system that I gave to it because in part it was a new process that was just getting off the ground; it had a somewhat rocky start, but on the whole, it worked out alright. There was some resistance to the concept of career management by some in the Foreign Service; there were people who felt that they were losing some of their authority; that was particularly true of people in the regional bureaus; they initially resented this new approach. To some extent, their perceptions may have been true, but in the final analysis, it didn't really work out that way. As trust developed among the participants in the assignment process, the system improved. It just took time to develop that trust.

Q: In 1964, you became the Executive Director of the Office of the Secretary. How did that happen?

SKOUFIS: One day, my boss, Earl Sohm, called me. He had gotten a call from the Office of the Secretary telling him that the Executive Director, Murray Jackson, was leaving for an overseas assignment. Who ever was involved wanted to know whether I would be interested in being considered for that vacancy. I said: “Sure!”. I had just been recommended by the selection boards for a promotion to FSO-2. I thought it would be a good assignment and more in line with my career interests. The career management position was more of a staff job; I preferred operational responsibilities. It was a perfect assignment and fortunately I was chosen by Ben Reid, who was then the Department's Executive Secretary. As soon as the selection was made, I moved to the new office and went to work.

The Secretary of State was Dean Rusk; the Under Secretary was George Ball. They had assembled a very good staff to support them. I found it a real privilege to work in that Office. My role primarily was to coordinate the administrative support that the Secretary and the Under Secretary required: personnel, payroll, etc. The largest component of the Secretary's office was the Executive Secretariat—the people who processed the papers going to the Secretary and the Under Secretary, making sure that they had been properly prepared and cleared. The Secretariat also made sure that the decisions reached by the Secretary and Under Secretary were implemented. Beyond the immediate Office of the Secretary and Under Secretary, the Seventh Floor complex included the Policy Planning Staff, the special assistants for different functions (e.g., fisheries, labor), the Counselor, the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs (Doug Macarthur was the incumbent at the time). My role was to coordinate the financial aspects of these operations, preparing the budgets and in general supporting them in any way one could. Soon after I became Executive Director, the U.S. got involved in the Congo crisis and that required an expansion of the Executive Secretariat. This was one of the early attempts to develop an Operations Center which required urgent financial and personnel resources. We operated practically around the clock during this crisis. It was a very modest effort compared to what a permanent Operations Center became later, but this was the beginning of a 24 hour watch operations. At the time I am discussing, we were principally interested in keeping our principals informed of events in a critical area of the world. The Congo crisis, as I said, was one of the first to test the concept. That crisis required the Secretary and the Under Secretary to be in their offices for almost 24 hours a day, seven days per week, dealing with the cable traffic coming and going to Congo and other posts on the crisis and to coordinate the efforts of the Department and other government agencies as the crisis unfolded. To assist the Department's principals and to make sure that information, both written and verbal, flowed to the right places, including the White House which was deeply involved in this crisis management, we established a support activity staffed primarily by Foreign Service officers which would be a filter the information traffic from the Department, the filed and other agencies and who make

sure that the necessary information got to the right places in a timely fashion. We ran this support operation around the clock. The Secretary would be briefed periodically; when he arrived in the office in the morning, he would be immediately briefed on what had transpired during the night. The Secretariat and the Operations Center were the information traffic controllers who made sure that the Secretary, the Under Secretary and the appropriate bureaus were currently informed.

When I became the Executive Director, there already was a very small Operations Center working. But we had to expand it to take care of the Congo crisis, which meant moving some people off the Seventh Floor. We wanted to have the Operations Center as close to the Secretary's office as possible. It was a good group of people who staffed the Operations Center. We got more equipment, upgrading our ability to communicate with the White House, for example. The White House had also started developing its own operations center and it became critical that the two centers be able to be in continual and immediate communications. We developed a good communications link. It was one of the first classified communications lines which enabled us to transmitted us to send messages to the White House and back without having to go through a coding-decoding process because the lines were shielded. Before we installed this link, we used to run messages beck and forth in a car. It worked out beautifully.

The Congo crisis was the beginning. Then Vietnam started to heat up, then we had the Dominican Republic crisis. We had a change in some of the key positions in the Secretary's office. Tom Mann moved up from AA to become Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. Because of his background in Latin American affairs, Mann became on the principals involved in the Dominican Republic crisis. Averell Harriman was also one of the principals and concentrated on Far East issues and especially Vietnam. So while I was in S/S, it was a very active place. All of the those crises as well as many other problems required close liaison with the White House. One day, President Johnson came over to have lunch with the Secretary. He walked through the Operations Center and saw a piece of equipment that was coding some material from some newspapers. He stopped and

read the tape and couldn't figure out the sources of the material. When he asked, he was told that this was the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) material; that was a U.S. government agency that read foreign media material, translated it and distributed it to U.S. government officials. Johnson thought that was fascinating. He immediate ordered that a FBIS machine be put in the President's office. We never considered the information entirely reliable, although it was an additional bit of input. But the President wanted it.

My office coordinated the catering of this lunch with the President, the Secretary and a few of the Department's senior officers. We brought in a bartender to serve the sherry, which was the custom before the meal was served. But President fooled us all and asked for a low-cal Root Beer. Everybody broke out in a great flutter and looked high and low. Finally, they found a bottle. It tested our resourcefulness to the full, but that is the sort of thing that an administrative staff had be alert to. On the whole, the Executive Director's job was very interesting because it was a very busy period.

My office was also responsible for the liaison with the White House on the use of military aircraft so that Secretary could use that mode of transportation when he was going abroad or when he had to fly down to the Johnson Ranch in Texas. The President would periodically call Secretary Rusk down to discuss some problems. The White House controlled these aircraft so that we had to go to the military staff to obtain transportation. They would arrange it and the Secretary would then go to Andrews Air Force base to take off.

I remember the time when Henry Cabot Lodge had just returned from Vietnam. The President wanted Lodge to go to Europe to explain what our Far East policies were. After the President and Ambassador Lodge had met, I got the word through Ben Reid that Ambassador Lodge was going on a Presidential mission with a small supporting cast. My job was to get an airplane. So I called the White House and was told that no aircraft was available. It was suggested that since there were so few people travelling, the Lodge party should go commercial. That made good sense to me and I didn't foresee any

problems; neither did Ben Reid and others. i was to get in touch with Ambassador Lodge in Massachusetts to inform him that we were making reservations and that we would have the tickets very soon. When he heard my message, he very politely informed me that he would not go commercial; he would only fly from Andrews Air Force base. If there were no military aircraft available, then he just wouldn't go at all. I had to go back to Ben and convey the message; he asked me to call the White House again to see whether there had been any commitments had been made on aircraft during the conversations that the President and the Ambassador had had. Finally, after getting no response from the colonels, I called Jack Valenti and I asked him the question. I told him what I had heard from Ambassador Lodge. Valenti told me that he would give me an answer that afternoon. Sure enough, that afternoon I got a call from Andrews telling me that they had an airplane ready to take Ambassador Lodge. I then called Valenti to thank him for his efforts. Those were the episodes that made the job interesting. Of course, the word immediately got around the Department that a plane was going to Europe. All the strap hangers would call or come to see me to see whether they could hop aboard. By the time we were finished, the Lodge party had tripled. Everybody seemed to have a reason all of a sudden to go to Europe. Of course, it did save the government some money.

Some later, we got a bill from the Air Force for all these trips. I must have left the Executive Director's job before that issue was ever resolved. The amount must have been astronomical. I think we settled the issue somehow, but I am not sure that we ever paid.. Our travel was not a “freebie” as far as the Air Force was concerned.

Q: From your vantage point at the pinnacle of the Department, did you get any feel for how effective the Department was?

SKOUFIS: It was interesting to see the Department from that point of view. It was responsive to us and very effective. In the first place, when the crises broke out, the State Department professionals really reacted quickly and effectively. I was surprised by the attention that the top-level people in the Department paid to the details. They had to call

people and be briefed on all the details of an event. That stemmed, as I learned later, by their concern for being queried by the White House on details. There was a pension for details in the White House that forced the senior officers in the Department to be read to answer questions on the even the most minute and perhaps insignificant point. All the special assistants on the Seventh Floor, all of whom were career personnel, either Foreign or Civil Service—like George Springsteen or Jeff Kitchen in Politico-Military—had all the facts at their finger tips. Moreover, S/S had first call on the best talent in the Foreign Service and the Department. When we had a vacancy in the Secretariat, which was generally staffed by officers at the FSO-4 level, we were given names of the best candidates that the system could find—people like Larry Eagleburger (whose name was on one list that was sent to me; I grabbed him immediately because I knew he was a sharp young man), Jim Lowenstein (he wanted a job in S/S. I told him he had one, but after he returned from home leave, that job had been filled by someone else because Personnel said that we were getting too many of the cream of the crop. I had to give Jim up to another bureau, which also wanted him; I kept arguing and I think the decision was finally made by the Director General; it went against us because we were draining off all the talent), Dick Moose, Bob Gray. There were a lot of talent officers in S/S/.

Ed Little was one of the special assistants to the Secretary. Ed was leaving for an overseas assignment and we had to replace him. The other special assistant was Ed Streator, but he was too junior to move up to the senior spot. I called Personnel and I asked for the files of the five best FSO-3 officers in the Service. One of them was Tom Pickering; another was Charlie Bray. Tom became our first choice. I based my judgement just on the file. I thought I had him, but then I was called by the Director General saying that Tom was slated to become a DCM, although he also agreed that Tom was the best candidate of those they had sent to me. But Personnel felt that he was needed at some critical post in Africa; so e lost him. But we got Art “Buck” Borg, who was my second choice. So we got him. I mention that episode to show the importance that Personnel

placed on assignments to the Secretary's office. They were of course right and made my job a great pleasure; I didn't have too many problems.

We had the same situation when Bob Anderson, George Ball's special assistant, left. There George Springsteen made these selection. He didn't get files on any “deadwood”. He had trouble making the decision.

I also had no problem with financial resources. I got all the money for travel and other needs as I requested them. We of course had access to the special confidential fun; that helped a lot to carry out some of the operations of the Seventh Floor. We were always concerned about travel costs because those funds were in short supply in the whole Department. But when a Seventh Floor principal had to go, we always found the money. It was the straphangers that gave us problems from time to time. It is difficult to keep the Secretary's party down to manageable proportions; that was the big headache.

All in all, it was very interesting job. I spent a lot of hours in my office, but they were pleasurable.

Q: In 1966, you were off to London as the Counselor for Administration. Did this also come out of the clear blue sky?

SKOUFIS: It certainly did. I got a call sometime in February, 1966, telling me that my name was on a list for a senior training assignment, either the War College or the Senior Seminar. I had been in S/S for about two years at the time and I was happy to go to school. Sometime in the middle of May, I got a call from Fred Irving, at that time the Executive Director of the Bureau of European Affairs, telling me that he was putting me on a list of people to replace Findley Burns in London. I told Fred that I thought I was going to the senior training although I had not heard anything more since the call in February. I knew from my own experience that I would have gotten the official word in July. Fred told me that he had already checked my possible assignment with Bill Boswell in Personnel. I said : “Fine; if all agree, it is OK with me”. About two-three weeks later, I got a call from

Boswell, who in his usual dramatic fashion, said: “Damn you, I thought you said you wanted to go to senior training”. I told him that I was told that I would go to senior training; I had really not been asked. He then told me that I had been approved to go to London as the Counselor for Administration. He seemed quite upset. He then asked: “Do you want to go to the War College or London?” At that time, no one got an assignment to the War College until it was all over. Here I had an opportunity to go to London to do the administrative work; it was the job that people like myself dreamt about. So I told him “London”. And that is where I went.

A few days later, Fred Irving called and said: “You guys better get ready to go to London in a hurry”. I said: “What do you mean: you guys?”. Fred said that both Jack Herfurt and I were assigned to London; he was going to be the Consul General. He wanted both of us to get to London in a hurry because Findley's appointment as Ambassador to Jordan had been announced and Ambassador Bruce didn't want too much of a gap. So Jack and I got on a boat in the middle of June for England. When I got to London, I found that poor Findley had a medical problem and he didn't leave the post for four weeks. So in the interim, I was extra baggage. We couldn't get into our house while the Burns were still in London. I took a quick tour of the constituent posts during that month.

Phil Kaiser was the DCM. It was very interesting assignment. Following Findley Burns at a post is an experience. I went to London with some trepidation because I realized that Findley had a very special relationship with the Ambassador. I realized that in very short order. When I got to London, I found that all the rush to get there had been somewhat exaggerated, although perhaps unavoidable. Findley, as I said, was ill; he couldn't leave for his post as Ambassador to Jordan. So I spent a lot of time being briefed. Therefore, the transition was easy for me; I had a greater opportunity that is afforded to other newcomers to learn both about the administrative operations and the people in London. We lived first of all in a hotel; then we moved to temporary quarters in some staff housing the U.S.

government owned. Jack Herfurt was able to move into Consul General's house right away.

London, of course, was a large post and staffed by a good bunch of people. I don't recall any major problems that required immediate attention. Findley had developed a very smooth operation; it was clear that he ran the whole damn business practically. I benefitted greatly from his sage counsel and advice. The first problem I encountered was to fend off the political, economic and USIS section, all of which wanted the offices that had been assigned to the Administrative Counselor. All the Section heads were on the same floor with the Ambassador; everybody wanted Findley's office upon his departure. It was lucky there was an overlap; I might never had the same space if there had been a gap between Findley and myself. Some of the other section chiefs had made their case to Phil Kaiser, who told them that they better talk to me first. Of course, once established, I was not about to move; it was one of the most delightful set-ups you can imagine in an Embassy, particularly for an Administrative Counselor. Findley had warned me not to be pushed off that floor and downstairs; it would just downgrade the administrative section and was very much opposed to it. As it turned out, I was in London for five years and held on to the same office for all that time. I learned later that one of my successors did give up that office suite and moved to another part of the building. We also had one of the great houses in London in a beautiful area of the city.

Findley was good act to follow. During his time, the Embassy had fallen heir to a lot of homes that had been relinquished by the MAAG mission. The MAAG to the UK had been a sizeable contingent which was phased out. They left us several good properties, including the one that became the residence of the Administrative Counselor. It was a delightful place within walking distance of the Chancery. The accommodations were beautiful and were well furnished. I was surprised that all the government properties in London had been upgraded in terms of furniture and furnishings. They all looked great. It had been FBO funds that had been used for this purpose. I was surprised that the FBO allotment for the maintenance of the residences was rather generous. It became even

more generous when Ambassador Bruce refused to use any of it for his residence. I reviewed all our properties, including the Ambassador's residence, to which he invited me for lunch and then gave me a guided tour. It was clear that a lot of work needed to be done there—painting, new drapes, new covers for the furniture—, but the Ambassador had a couple of dogs which behaved like all dogs. The Ambassador said that he wanted his residence just in that way. He said that if he let us administrative types into the house, we would never get out. He thought that he didn't have much more time in London anyway and therefore wouldn't let any of us in. He told me that if FBO allotted the post any money for his residence, I was to use for other residences. He didn't want it returned, but he was not going to use it for his residence. Therefore, we spent practically nothing on the Ambassador's residence. When Ambassador Annenberg came—he was accustomed to living well—, he immediately set about refurbishing the residence at his own expense.

Tom Hughes, who had been the Director of INR, came to London, as the DCM. This was his first experience in the Foreign Service although he knew a lot of Britishers. It was a learning experience for him, but unfortunately he only stayed for a year or so because of his wife's medical problems. Then there was another hiatus, but it was not significant for me because we all continued to report to the Ambassador as we had done since Mr. Annenberg had arrived. As a matter of fact, we had an inspection team in London, headed by Bob McClintock, at the time; it couldn't understand how a large Embassy like London could operate so well without a DCM. The team couldn't understand why the Department was not more anxious to fill the DCM job. The fact was that we operated very well even without a DCM. McClintock described the situation as a “very unique management situation. The Ambassador runs the whole show through a college of counselors”. The section chiefs coordinated well and the Embassy functioned quite well. What it had was an Ambassador who was quite willing to assume a management role. But you have to understand that Ambassador Annenberg didn't have much input in terms of the political or economic situation of the country, in terms of understanding the country. He had to rely on the professional staff to do that. His relationships with me were probably more frequent

than with any other section chief; when I went to talk “budgets” with him, he knew what I was talking about immediately. He learned quickly on how we got our money, how we could spend it and whether we had enough; he learned very quickly how the Department worked. It was a very interesting experience for an administrative counselor.

Ambassador Annenberg did develop a lot of contacts through social activities. He entertained royally and I do mean “royally”. If you got an invitation to a table at the Annenberg residence, you were in the upper class. He used the best china, the best wines, the best silverware—his collections were gorgeous. The staff was greatly impressed. One day, he asked me what his car was. Ambassador Bruce had never used a Cadillac; he had decided that London was not a good place for it. So we had a Chrysler or a big Pontiac. The Bruces had two personal cars: a Jaguar and a Mercedes. She drove the Jaguar and when he wanted to go off by himself, he used the Mercedes. Of course, the official car and chauffeurs were available at all times. We had a couple of chauffeurs dedicated to the Ambassador's car. Ambassador Bruce was very kind to the motor pool and since he knew his way around London, used to go by himself. We didn't have to take them to all their dinner parties. However, that situation changed; neither Annenbergs drove, although he brought his own Rolls Royce from Philadelphia. But one of the first things that Ambassador Annenberg wanted was a Cadillac. That was easy to do; all I did was call Bob Peck, then Director of Operations in the Department, who said that he had been expecting that call because I guess London was the only post that did not have a Cadillac. Undoubtedly, in briefing Ambassador Annenberg, someone told him that he was eligible to have a Cadillac. So the problem was not in procuring the car; the problem arose in how to get it there. I kept getting promised of shipping dates, but there seemed always to be a problem—for example, whether it would be right or left-hand drive. One day, we got word that President Nixon would be visiting London again. The Ambassador quite rightly was concerned that there would no Cadillac for the President. The Bob Peck really came through. He got the Cadillac driven to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, where it was loaded on a cargo plane and delivered to an Air Force Base in England. We picked it

up there and finally had a Cadillac. We used the rationale that the Cadillac was necessary for the Presidential visit, which it was.

They had a driver from the motor pool whom they liked and he was assigned full time to drive the Annenbergs. The Embassy of course provided all the transportation he needed, but the Ambassador knew that he needed a driver for his wife, who had her own schedule of events. So we took a driver out of the motor pool, put him on administrative leave without pay and the ambassador picked up his salary. That driver kept his re-employment rights and whenever his colleagues got raises, the Ambassador would increase the driver's salary as well. That way, there was no issue about using a government employee to chauffeur Mrs. Annenberg around. This was an illustration of the Ambassador's general approach which was not in any way embarrass “his President” by using an official car and driver to transport Mrs. Annenberg around. It was a pleasure to work for an ambassador like that. That was the kind of guy Ambassador Annenberg was.

After Tom Hughes' departure, as I said, there was a hiatus. Then we learned that Jerry Greene was coming as DCM. He was a professional Foreign Service officer, who had been in the Service for many years. His reputation was excellent. I hadn't known him before, but we became well acquainted after he arrived because he was to be my boss. We briefed him on how we had operated. He worked his way in slowly, learning about the post and trying to win the confidence of the Ambassador. It was clear that when he arrived, Ambassador Annenberg had some questions about the need for DCM. But Jerry was very good, establishing good relationships with all the sections of the Embassy. The Ambassador insisted that we continue to meet with him on a weekly basis. We all reported to the Ambassador, but I, as well as other section chiefs, made sure that Jerry knew what we were going to discuss with the Ambassador. This enabled him to have an input, so that he didn't feel left out. Herfurt made an effort to include him as well as Bill Galloway, the Political Counselor and others. But it was clear that the Ambassador was running the show. Then came performance evaluation time. I gave out the forms and set a schedule for completion. I gave the Counselors' forms to Jerry Greene; that was standard procedure

in the Foreign Service. The DCM was the rating officer and the Ambassador was the reviewing officer. So Jerry drafted the ratings and showed them to us. Then he sent them to the Ambassador. One day, I got a call from the Ambassador who wished to see me right away. When I got into his office, he showed me the ratings and said: “What are all these things?” I explained what they were and the system that we used to rate officers. He then asked: “But why is Jerry writing them? The section chiefs work for me!”. I told him that that was correct, but that was the way the system worked. He told me to take those ratings back and to send him fresh forms. I told him that he would have the last word as reviewing officer. But he insisted that he wanted to be the rating officer; he wanted to know why he couldn't be the rating officer if he wished to be so. I told him that if he wanted that, that is the way it would be. So I went back to Jerry to tell him what had happened. Jerry blew his stack. He told me not to do anything until he called me. So I went back to my office and sat on the ratings. The next day, Jerry called and said: “Pete, send the new forms to the Ambassador. I am leaving! He doesn't need me”. Jerry talked to someone in the Department and got another assignment after only about one year. To be honest, I didn't blame him. It was clear that the Ambassador didn't want or needed a DCM. The Ambassador the reports, but they were very sparsely written. They had no depth like the ones written by Foreign Service officers. I mean that for me he probably wrote: “Skoufis is the best administrative guy I have ever met”. Period. For Herfurt he wrote: “He is the best Consul General I have ever met”. They were all very laudatory, but I don't think they were going to do any of us any good. I talked to Jerry about the situation; he suggested that I send them in as I had to do, with an explanatory note of what had happened.

Q: London had always been known for having morale problems, particularly among the staff employees. Was that true when you were there? How did it manifest itself? What was done about it?

SKOUFIS: It was true. It was a very difficult situation. It was difficult to deal with because of certain basic assumptions that had been made. London was a large post and as many of its counterparts was somewhat impersonal. A good percentage of the staff employees

would go their own way after work. Many, particularly those with small families, lived in government housing, but some secretaries lived in private quarters—apartments that were affordable within their allowances. A lot of morale problems came to my attention because several of the girls explained to me why they didn't like serving in posts like London, Paris or Rome. They had served previously in African posts where their social life centered around activities sponsored or encouraged by the Embassy. That was absent in London; we did very little for the Embassy staff as a group. We didn't have group outings or parties, except for the Marines who would have parties at their quarters. We had a sizeable Marine contingent and they hosted TGIF parties. But in general, the Embassy did not sponsor organized activities. When I discussed this issue with our personnel people, we felt that there wasn't any need for it. The resourceful people found plenty to do. London and England were full of activities. You could travel up and down the country; you could travel to Europe. A lot of people took advantage of those opportunities and they were no problem. But there was this group of Foreign Service staffers who had become dependent on an Embassy to do things for them; they felt when those services were not provided, it was somehow unfair. That created quite a morale problem. As I said, most of those who had a morale problem had come from posts where the Embassy took care of them 24 hours every day. They had a problem.

We did not have too much of a problem with the working conditions because there was a wide inter-change among sections. The various section chiefs tried very hard to bring their staff employees, mostly the female secretaries, into their homes whenever there were appropriate social occasions. I had to do a lot of that with my own people, most of whom were in the communications section. They were primarily single and many of whom had low morale. The communicators found it difficult to have a satisfactory tour because of their working hours. Perhaps we might have done more, but after all these people were not serving in a country with a different language.

There was some tensions created by the “staff vs. officers” syndrome. It was more evident in London than in any other post I have served in. Somehow the staff felt it was “second

class". Maybe it was because the professionals had such an interesting life, both in the office and socially. This feeling of "second class" ran even through some of the consular staff. The consular staff worked very hard; they were overburdened. That was one of our major headaches. We insisted that the British had passports and visas for any trips they took to the U.S. So there were always lines outside the Embassy. The people in the consular section started at nine and didn't get a break until five when they went home. It was that kind of operation. The workload created a lot of morale problems. I think Herfurt did a great job. He included his people in functions at his house; he gave them as much time off as he could. But undoubtedly, the consular staff was the hardest working group in the Embassy. No other Embassy section worked as hard as the consular section. Certainly no one in the administrative section did. But this unevenness of workload contributed to the low morale of the consular staff.

We all were aware that we had a morale problem; very few of these people would ask to be returned to London for another tour. Many did not consider being assigned to London as being a reward for having served in Africa. Many asked to be sent back to Africa after just a few months in London. For certain categories of staff, big posts are just not an appropriate assignment. One would think that England would have been one of the easiest posts for anyone—no language problem, favorable cost-of-living, plenty of cultural opportunities at reasonable prices, unlike Paris where you couldn't afford to take advantage of the opportunities even if you wanted. London had PX facilities; we had all of the creature comforts, but there was that feeling of belonging to an "Embassy family" that was lacking. That was hard to create at a post the size of London.

London was a most gratifying assignment. I was there, as I mentioned, for five years. After my home leave, I got back to London and received a call from the then Executive Director of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, advising me that he was going to recommend me for the administrative counselor job in Tokyo which was coming open. I said: "Fine". After three years in London, I was not surprised that someone in the Department, in his wisdom, would have thought that I had been in London long enough. So the Department

sent a cable which went to the Ambassador who called me. He wanted to know what this proposed transfer was all about. He wanted to know if I was trying to leave London. I said quickly: “No, sir! But I have been here three years and I assume the Department wants some one else here. We are all part of a system and we go where the system sends us”. He couldn't understand why I was being sent to somewhere else when I didn't want to leave London. I had originally told him that I was supposed to be in London for five years, but that the Department had the right and often invoked it to break tours whenever it wished. He finally said: “If you don't want to go, you are not going!” I said: “Thank you, Mr. Ambassador” and walked out. The Ambassador called Bill Macomber and told him that he had understood that he could keep his staff and now the Department was pulling people out. He said that he didn't want me to go. Shortly thereafter, I got a call from Bill Macomber wanting to know what I was trying to do by sicking the Ambassador on him. I assured Bill that I had not done that and then I reviewed my conversation with the Ambassador. The latter thought that what I was doing for him and the Embassy in London was just as important as anything I might for in Tokyo and therefore saw no reason for a move. That was the end of my transfer to Tokyo.

About a year later, or perhaps even sooner, I got a call from the then Director General, John Burns, saying that Graham Martin had just called from Saigon saying that he wanted me to join his staff as the Administrative Counselor. Burns said that he would propose that assignment. I told Burns that before he did anything, he'd better check with Macomber. I told him that I thought all bases had to be touched before this idea went much further in light of the previous effort to re-assign me. Burns said not to worry; that he could handle it. So a cable came to London, announcing that I had been assigned to Saigon to replace Theo Hall who was leaving. It also said that Graham Martin had requested my assignment. I had known Graham as did almost every one who had been in the administrative field. Ambassador Annenberg called me and we went through the same procedure. He said: “Skoufis, I thought you were going to stay here five years. What are you up to now?” I repeated to him what I had told him earlier about the Department's assignment process. I

told him that Department could make any assignments it wished and that in this particular case, Vietnam had the highest priority. He then asked again: “Do you want to go or not?”. This time I told him that I certainly did not want to go. He said: “I want you to stay here!” I told him that was fine with me, but that if the Department ordered my transfer, I would have to go or quit. The Ambassador repeated that he wanted me stay in London. Somehow, he seemed to feel that I was encouraging these transfers and I certainly was not. No one in his right mind would lobby to leave London to go to Vietnam or even Tokyo. So once again, Ambassador Annenberg called Washington, to Macomber, I would guess. Sure enough, another cable came from John Burns, canceling the Saigon assignment, but that at the end of my tour of duty in London, I would be considered for the Vietnam position. That was fine with me; I didn't care. So I stayed in London for five years. Very happy and still interesting even at the end. I suspect that weren't many officers who stayed in London that long and I only managed because of Ambassador Annenberg. He did the same thing for Bill Galloway, Jack Herfurt (he may have stayed for eight years. He didn't want to go anywhere; he just wanted to stay in London until he was eligible to retire. Galloway was there also for a long time. He also didn't want to go anywhere else).

When my five years were up, I told the Ambassador that I was not going to ask for an extension. I would have been crazy to do so after my experiences. I got a call from some one in Washington who told me that Ambassador Watson in Paris had requested that I replace Ralph Scarrit. I said that I didn't think that Scarrit had been in Paris long enough to be ready for re-assignment. The answer was: “The Ambassador wants you to replace Scarrit!”. I knew Watson; he used to fly over from Paris in his own airplane. He loved to go to the Navy PX. He also shopped elsewhere and went to the theater, with his wife and children. He would also visit the Embassy where we would greet him and he would talk to Ambassador Annenberg. So I got to know him; he was a “hail, well met” fellow. As soon as I hung up from that call from Washington, I immediately called Perry Culley who was the DCM in Paris. I wanted to find out what the score was. Perry started to laugh. It was clear that he had cranked up this plot and had convinced the Ambassador that

I was available. Culley of course knew that my five years were expiring and therefore had to be re-assigned. I had previously told him that I was supposed to go to Vietnam. I think he talked to John Burns, who really didn't care because he was leaving. So Culley assured me that the assignment was mine, if I wanted it. It didn't take me long to agree. Who wouldn't want to go to Paris? I then told Ambassador Annenberg about the Paris assignment. He said he knew all about it because his good friend, Dick Watson, had called him to ask about me. He said: “Of course, I had to tell him the truth!”.

We had the packers at our house on Friday night and that weekend we drove to Paris on a direct transfer (that was the only condition: no home leave that year). On Monday morning, the moving van was in front of our apartment house in Paris. Helen and I and our maid, whom we had brought from London, got out of our car and began to unpack. Three days later, I was at work at the Embassy, when I found out what had happened to poor Ralph Scarrit. He had run into a buzz saw with the Ambassador. FBO was refurbishing the Rothschild House on Rue St. Honore, which was the official residence. It had been a long term project moving from an empty building to an office for USIS to being a residence and then becoming the ambassador's residence after Congress had appropriated something like a million dollars. Wayne Hayes and Rooney were both instrumental in doing this. The idea was to restore the Rothschild House as a new residence for the Ambassador; then we would sell the Avenue D'Iena residential property, which was near the Eiffel Tower. This was property that the U.S. government had acquired in 1924. It was small and had outlived its usefulness; it had needed a lot of work, but it was a very valuable piece of real estate. FBO had surveyed the situation and had concluded that they could fix the Rothschild House for one million dollars and sell the old residence for two and a half million. So it was net gain for the U.S. government.

So the project got underway. Ralph had worked very closely with FBO on it; as a matter of fact, Leo Riordan of FBO was stationed in Paris to supervise the work. There was a personality problem. On a couple of occasions, Ralph had told the ambassador that there were certain things that couldn't be done. If you have to say “No” to an Ambassador,

you better do it very diplomatically, particularly if you are dealing with a titan of industry like Mr. Watson. His father had been the head of IBM and he had had a big role in the same company. These guys are not accustomed to hearing that the rules didn't allow for something they wanted. Apparently Watson's position was that if his wife wanted something, she would get it. So sooner rather than later, both Ralph and Leo were transferred. So the problem was left to me. It was a real headache in terms of finishing the job in time for a move that had been scheduled long ago. Of course, both Mr. and Mrs. Watson were changing the work constantly which didn't help the time schedule. They weren't fussy, but there were some changes they insisted on. The money was being consumed rapidly; there were special panels and cornishes and art work that had to be restored. It was very expensive work. The Ambassador himself had contributed something like $400,000 in addition to the appropriation to keep the project going. Most of his money went to buy furniture. It was a funny process. Joe Donelan was back in the Department at the time and was following the project. The Deputy Secretary was John Irvin, who was the Ambassador's brother-in-law. My problem was trying to convince the Ambassador that we had to work within a frame-work, particularly a financial one. When it came time to move, we noticed that several things had fallen between the cracks. Part of it was due that the whole project was financed by a number of allocations and that created problems. We had to pay for something out of one pocket and for others out of another. I could manage that because my mission was to move the Watson's into the new residence on time for a Fourth of July party. That was the target. We had to landscape the gardens.

We finally put together a group that was called “The Friends of 41”, because that was the address of the residence on St. Honore. These were public-spirited Americans who lived in Paris; they raised funds to purchase some items for the residence. One of the members was Randy Kidder and his wife; he was a former Foreign Service officer who became the President of the group. It was a very effective device to raise money; their donations became tax deductible. They bought carpets, etc. It was someone else's idea, but I developed and brought into being. Watson's contributions similarly were tax deductible.

One time, the FBO supervisor came from Washington and made a “walk through”. At the end of it, he declared the FBO role as finished with what ever was left being the Embassy's responsibility. I balked at that. For example, there was a powder room downstairs which did not have toilet paper dispenser in it. The roll of toilet paper sat on top of the tank. He told me that was my problem, not his. I pointed out to him that small problems like that multiplied by the many bathrooms the residence had (I think there must have been twenty) were a major headache and expense. I learned later that there were even difficulties in obtaining toilet seats not to mention other bathroom fixtures. But FBO insisted that those costs come out of the post's Maintenance and Repair budget and that it would not increase our allocation. I needed another $200,000 to get the house ready; just to put the finishing touches on it, light bulbs for the chandelier, etc. So I finally called Joe who came through with the necessary funds. I told him that unless I was able to complete the job, I too would be thrown out and the Department would have to find another Administrative Counselor; the Department might as well cough up the dough then because otherwise it might cost even more. In the final analysis, the new residence turned out to be a great success and it was finished in time for the Fourth of July party. After getting that job done, I was in pretty good shape with the Ambassador who turned out to be a very nice guy and a remarkable man.

He was the heir to one of the great fortunes of the world; he was extremely wealthy. He had his wife and six children at the post—three boys and three girls. Some were teenagers and in some difficulties from time to time. He wanted to do everything he could to keep his family together; so he converted an upstairs room into a game room. He bought them a juke box, he bought them a pin ball game machine, he built a movie theater for them. He paid all of that from his own pockets. He did have a very difficult personality. A normal human being has a range of emotions from low to high; Watson was on the extreme of that range at both ends. When he was low, he was the meanest son of bitch you have ever seen. And I mean “mean”. He was mean to his wife, his children, everybody. When he was up, there wasn't a more generous guy around. He would take me to lunch to “Tour de

Jacques". We would sit around and chat. I wondered whether he was just lonesome, but it was just his way of trying to be a nice guy. Sometimes, he would call and tell me that I was working too hard; he would then ask me to come to his office and look at the entrance to the Chancery wondering who was parked out there. Sometimes it was our representative to the OECD whose chauffeured car was parked outside. He would then tell me that there wasn't any parking allowed there and if the OECD man wanted to park, he should go into the parking garage. He just didn't want anyone parking in front of the entrance which he over-looked. That was the kind of guy he was. He was a man of tremendous contrasts which was his undoing. He was a heavy drinker, although it was controlled during the day. I never saw him drunk in the office. Helen and I would be invited to the residence periodically with other staff members to see movies—he had a tie in with a movie distributor so he and his kids could see American movies before they were shown in Paris. He would then drink a few scotches and before the evening was over, he was asleep. That was not an uncommon event. One time, he came home on an American passenger aircraft and made a pass at one of the stewardesses. That got into the papers after she reported the event. That forced him to resign.

Mrs. Watson was a very lovely and charming lady. She was easy to work with and not very demanding. Very nice. The children were not spoiled brats because she made sure that it wasn't going to happen. Mr. Watson had his own plane in Paris, as I mentioned. There was a crew of, I think, three people, whom he paid out of his own pockets. He was also a pilot so that he would fly the plane himself on occasions. He didn't travel that often, but he did go to England several times and to Vienna to a Chiefs of Mission conference. I don't think he ever flew his plane to the States.

My office was just under his. After I first arrived, he used to come down the steps. There was a IBM copying machine in the corridor outside my office. He wanted to know where we had gotten it. I said I didn't know. He said: "Get it the hell out of here. I don't want to see any IBM equipment in the offices. The next thing you know, there will be stories in the papers". I told him that we were just in the process of re-equipping the Embassy

with IBM electric typewriters. He said that was OK, because that was part of a general government contract worked out in Washington. It turned out that the copying machine was there because the IBM Paris office asked us to try it out; if we had found it satisfactory we would have bought some. But after the Ambassador's comments, it went out. In any case, he came downstairs one day with an envelope full of gasoline receipts for his airplane. He wanted to know if he could get reimbursement for the taxes that were paid, as we did in the Embassy whenever we bought gas for our cars. I told him that I would see if that could be done. I sent a note to the Foreign Office. Then I got a call from the Protocol Office which said that it had no precedent for my request—they never had had an Ambassador with his own airplane. But I said that the logic would seem to apply; if gasoline for our cars were tax exempt, then the same rules should apply to the gasoline for the Ambassador's airplane. The Protocol Officer agreed and in due course, the Ambassador got his reimbursement. Of course, the French had to establish a new procedure and that took some time, but I was told to assure the Ambassador that his taxes would be reimbursed. I said that I didn't think the money was an issue, but that the Ambassador saw it as a matter of principle.

One day, he told me that people were making long distance calls on the Embassy system. He asked me whether all the calls were business related. I said: “They'd better be!”. He wanted to know how I could assure him of that. He instructed me to put a pay station in the Embassy. He then told me that in IBM his father had the phone system so rigged that when any IBM official wanted to make a long-distance call to Europe, a red light would flash in his father's office. That was one of IBM's early fetishes, some of which the son brought with him. So we put a telephone pay station in the Chancery. Of course, no one used it. That was the kind of person Ambassador Watson was. He got along with the French quite well. He spoke French; he had been educated in France and had spent a good deal of time there when IBM was starting in France. That is where the headquarters of IBM World Trade was established; there was a big IBM complex just in back of the Embassy where both the European and France offices were located. So he had spent

considerable time in France before becoming ambassador. Of course, through him, we met many of the IBM people. He would see them socially, but I not aware that he ever intervened on IBM's behalf. He tried to be very careful about those relationships, as my story about the copier illustrates. Ambassador Watson was also a very generous patron of the American school which was attended by all his children.

In any case, serving with Ambassador Watson was a very interesting experience. He was the Republican member of the family; his brother, Tom, was a Democrat. The family covered both sides. Tom later went to the USSR as Ambassador in the Carter administration. Shortly after Arthur Watson left Paris, his brother-in-law, John Irvin was appointed. The contrast in personalities was amazing. Ambassador Irvin was as fine a gentleman as you would ever want to meet. He was a widower—his wife, a Watson, had passed away some years earlier. He came to Paris with his son and daughter who were young teen-agers at the time. It was a lovely family; the Ambassador was very devoted to his two children. They went to school in Paris, although the son eventually returned to the States to complete his education. Irvin had been the Deputy Secretary and therefore knew the system well. We had no problem in running the Embassy. He spoke French and had a very good relationship with the French. Culley, who had been the DCM, retired when Watson did and became the head of the American Hospital in Paris. The new DCM was Jack Kubisch with whom I worked closely. The Paris Embassy became a very conventional and good operation. There were no major problems.

The major difference between London and Paris was in the ambassadorial style of the two principals. Annenberg ran his Embassy differently from a traditional style. Paris was much more the norm. Both were big Embassies with their usual problems. A freeze on travel, for example, which occurred from time to time took its toll on morale. Fortunately, it didn't happen very often, but when it did it had a bigger impact because more people were involved. My biggest problem in Paris was a financial one because the rate of exchange between the dollar and the franc kept changing in favor of the franc. It had been 6:1 or 7:1 or 8:1; it slid down to 3.8:1. It was very hard for the Department to obtain more dollars to

match these changes in exchange rates. I remember very vividly the time we had to do a local wage survey; we were way behind on our pay scales because we had not been able to keep up with the inflation that was occurring in France. The Department sent a team to make the survey which showed that a sizeable increase was due to our local employees. We were faced with a very touchy situation; there was some discussion of a strike. Fortunately nothing developed. I finally convinced the Department to approve the new wage scale by surrendering a number of local positions; we cut back on motor pool services; we cut positions out of the administrative section and forced other sections to cut back as well. Those reductions, which included American positions as well, enable EUR finally to finance the new wage scale. That was an example of the kind of administrative problems we had to face.

Both London and Paris were qualitatively well staffed. Those posts attracted very good officers; the section chiefs were all good. Hank Cohen was the head of the Political Section; Allen Holmes was there. Many of the staff became ambassadors later and you could tell that would be so even in their junior years. They were sharp.

We had a very good relationship with other agencies. In both London and Paris we went through the periodic reduction of staffs exercises (BALPA, for example). In London we surveyed all U.S. government activities in England. We found several military units that were remnants of World War II—assessing damage from strategic bombings, etc. But we told the Department that these units were the responsibilities of the DoD and that the Embassy would not pass judgment on them, but would look at all civilian activities. We found a guy in North Scotland from the Weather Bureau which was a part of the Department of Commerce. His job was to send balloons up to test the weather over the Arctic or somewhere.

Q: Then in 1975, you were appointed as Deputy Inspector Genera. Did you want to make a comment about the Inspection Corps of the mid-70s?

SKOUFIS: At the time, we were getting good people for the Inspection Corps. We managed to upgrade the quality of the Inspectors and usually had a former Ambassador as the Chief Inspector. Bob Sayre tried very hard to put some meat on the bones of the structure; he was trying to make it more meaningful and to try to develop more significant measures of posts' effectiveness. There was a group in the Department which was trying to make the same judgment through a computerized system. That was being done in the Office of Management (M/MO) first (later it was transferred to the Information Systems Office) through a system called “Management by Objectives”. The project was headed by Clayton McManaway, who used to head M/MO. The idea was to establish some objectives for each of an Embassy's section and then to measure progress towards meeting those objectives through the use of a computer. Their hopes were to find objectives that would be common to all posts in the Foreign Service giving come leeway obviously for peculiar requirements. I worked on that team as the representative of the Inspector General because we were going to use this management tool. That Task Force met practically throughout my eighteen months in the IG. It was not an easy job because we had to draw on the substantive officers to talk to us about their objectives and then we had to talk to the computer programmers who had had develop the software necessary to make the information useful. But it was a very interesting exercise, trying to develop a measuring device so that you could have some standards for measurements and comparisons among posts. It would have been more accurate that the subjective measures that a variety of inspectors were applying. I thought the idea showed some promise, but it moved very slowly partly because of the difficulties of the project itself. First, it was very hard to figure out what posts should be doing and then we had to categorize posts by certain criteria. The system was also an attempt to get a better handle on how a post should be staffed. The assumption was that given a certain objectives, one could then determine how many people it would take to reach them. It was all good in theories and may be possible to implement a program like that today, but we certainly weren't able to do so fifteen years ago.

It was not the first time that such an effort had been undertaken. The first birth, I think, was under Crockett ten years earlier. This was an Eagleburger reincarnation. In any case, Sayre was trying to do something with this concept; he himself was a pretty good manager. The Inspector General was formally reporting to the Secretary, but in fact, his more frequent contacts were with the Under Secretary for Management (M). Bob liked the concept of “M”; he thought that it was a good idea that might be able to overcome some of the bureaucratic inertia that had set in the administrative area. That area had slowed down considerably; things were not happening in the “A” area.

The job of Deputy Inspector General was very interesting. I was the number two deputy; the senior deputy was Bob Yost, who concerned himself with substantive issues. When Sayre and Yost happened to be out of town, which happened on a couple of occasions, I used to attend the Secretary's large weekly staff meetings. It was a very interesting job. We were briefed by personnel of other agencies and by INR almost on a daily basis on what was going on in the world, what the U.S. government's priorities seemed to be and what our efforts were.

My job included the recruitment of people for the Inspection Corps. It was a collective effort with Ambassador Sayre having the last word, but I was supposed to come up with the names of potential candidates. As I said, we got some good officers, but we had difficulties getting female officers. I wanted Rozanne Ridgway, but she got away from us. I talked to her and I thought we had her. She had been a DCM, but she had a health problem so that she wasn't available for travel. But we were never able to recruit a female officer.

I had bought a house in Virginia and we had settled in. I was getting seriously concerned about the government's pay schedule. I was bumping my head against the ceiling; I had already been in the Foreign Service for 35 years (counting my time in the military). In 1977, I did a few calculations. At the time, the government insisted a deducting 7% from your pay-check for retirement purposes, even though the annuity was fixed because 35 years was the maximum that could be used to calculate retirement benefits. I was told

that the law would be revised to eliminate this unfairness. But in truth, I didn't see much action on the part of the Department to get the law revised. I thought I was subsidizing the system by giving it 7% of my pay without any possibility of a return. So I kept hitting this ceiling and then I decided that I would look for other employment. I prepared a resume of my 35 years of service. I made my availability known around town. The Department had a retirement operation which was supposed to set up interviews for those officers who wished or who had to retire. I got a couple of interviews; both were very interesting jobs. I did not get one of them; that was the job of Executive Director of Mt. Vernon—George Washington's residence. The ladies that ran the place were looking for an Executive Director. I had a lovely interview; they told me that I was just the kind of person they were looking for and that they would let me know. I was quite encouraged. You would have had to live in one of the houses on the grounds, which was a small drawback. Another candidate was Harry Symmes, former Ambassador. In the final analysis, Harry got the job which was good one which paid well. I also interviewed for a job at the Meridian House; I think it was for the administrative position below the President. They said they were interested in me, but I said that I didn't want the job because the pay was very low—$12 or $13 thousand per year. They told me that it was almost a volunteer job and it would have barely covered my expenses.

Then one day, I dropped a resume in the Bureau for International Organizations. It was the clearing house in the Department for jobs in the United Nations. Shortly afterwards, I got a call from IO telling me that the Director General of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) was coming to town and that he wanted an American for the job of Assistant Director General for Administration and Finance. IO said it had three or four people lined up and that it wanted me to add my application. I was asked to fill out the U.N. forms which I did. In due course, I had an interview with the Director General, Dr. Eduardo Saouma, a Lebanese. He had been in agricultural field for many years; he had graduated from the University of Montpellier in France. He explained that he wanted an American for the administrative job. He explained the organization to me. He said that there would be

an American Deputy Director General who was going to retire from the Department of Agriculture. I talked to him a little bit in French because he seemed to be more at home in that language than he was in English and of course by that time I could handle French quite well. He was going to interview some one in New York and then would let me know.

Over the Christmas holidays of 1976, I got a call from IO asking whether I could go to Rome for a fuller interview with Dr. Saouma; I was among the finalists and he wanted to see me in Rome. I was told that the Washington office of FAO would supply me with a ticket. I said I thought it would be useless to go over the holidays because from my experience, I thought that all would be closed. But I was told to go to talk to the liaison office which confirmed in fact that FAO would not be open until January 9. That was alright with me; I took a couple of days of leave. They gave me first class air tickets and I flew to Rome. They put me up in a very nice hotel. I was introduced to several members of Dr. Saouma's immediate staff and I was interviewed by the Chef de Cabinet—his special assistant. I was also interviewed by the Budget Director, Ed West, who was English. He had the job when it was one job—budget and administration. In a reorganization, the two functions were separated and Ed preferred the budget job; so I was being considered for administration and finance. The Director General prided himself of being a man of action; he was difficult type. Before I left Rome, he told me that the job was mine.

When I returned to Washington mid-January, I learned that Congress was considering a pay raise for government employees, which would have meant a sizeable increase for me. But it would not have been effective until February 1. I had told Saouma that I could report sometime between March 1 and March 15 because I had to give some notice to Bob Sayre (he of course knew that I was being interviewed but nothing about the timing). Of course, by staying on the State payroll until the effective date of the pay raise, I would be paid my terminal leave at the higher rate. I had a lot of leave and I think in all, it added up to about a year's pay. I had a choice of being seconded, thereby remaining on the State Department's pay role or to retire outright. I did the arithmetic; the advantage of seconding was that I would get my in-grade pay raises and would leave open the door for a return to

the Foreign Service. But financially, it was clear that retirement was the way to go. I would have received my retirement pay and my FAO salary. That was a good financial deal; the FAO emoluments were very generous and were tax-reimbursed (that is, I paid the taxes to Uncle Sam, but FAO reimbursed me for them).

In closing, I should say that I had a very interesting career in the Foreign Service. Both Helen and I are very grateful for the opportunities provided us, for the ambience in which we worked, the colleagues that I met over the years. I come away with a feeling that I served really in the “Golden Age” of the Foreign Service. Those years after World War II were very interesting and exciting years for those interested in public service. I used to describe our tasks as public service. It was a very satisfying and fulfilling job. I may have been unique in terms of my assignments; I have no complaints about that, of course. But I had a very rich experience; I don't know how my life could have been better and I am, as I said, most grateful.

Q: That was a very interesting career and we are delighted that you were able to cover it with us. It will give readers insights into the workings of the Department of State and into the role of managers in that institutions. On behalf of the Foreign affairs Oral History Program I thank you for your time.

End of interview